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# Local Patriots: Dewar’s Scotch Whisky, Prosociality, Politics, and Place—1846–1930

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Drawing from the literature strands of philanthropy, business, and history, this work explores the business, prosocial, and political activities of a prominent family in the Scotch whisky industry, with specific emphasis on two brothers’ philanthropy and its impact on a place—the city of Perth, Scotland. In our analysis, we tell the story of the second-generation owners of Dewar’s Scotch whisky company, brothers John Alexander and Tommy Dewar, and their journey of prosocial place-based service and giving. Consistent throughout are the themes of global success, family, local and national networks, and regional embeddedness, alongside the role of formal and informal giving. We offer an analysis of the prosocial activities that represent unexplored dimensions of business success, placing them in both spatial and temporal contexts. Within this is the story of a multigenerational family business’s international growth and success.

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**Keywords:** entrepreneurs; philanthropy; Scotch whisky

## Introduction

Business historians have long considered the relationship between entrepreneurship, wealth creation, and philanthropy, detailing how the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed entrepreneurs engaging in philanthropy and charitable giving fueled by the wealth generated from capitalist, entrepreneurial profit-making activities.<sup>1</sup> Successful entrepreneurs engaged in philanthropy from historic to contemporary times to extend power in different locales using their wealth and the generative nature of capital forms in their giving. This has recently been understood by business historians through the lens of Bourdieu’s capital theory to capture the

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1. Levy, One. Altruism and the Origins of Non-Profit Philanthropy.

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generative nature of philanthropy and its conversion to power and influence.<sup>2</sup> The underlying premise of Bourdieu's capital theory regarding philanthropy assumes that giving produces capital exchanges and conversions, which benefit entrepreneurs in a clearly identifiable way. We consider that such a transactional approach, while prominent beyond the specificity of locales, does not adequately explain all forms of philanthropy. For example, what happens when there is no obvious capital return for the specific act of giving? Moreover, what role does place play in such giving? Entrepreneurs often have strong ties to their locales and this contextual element requires further exploration to better understand giving where there is no evident capital return from the act itself, recognizing that the generative nature of business and politics may be observed. There is, therefore, an apparent gap in our understanding of the emergence of philanthropy as an informal, personalized undertaking arising from wealth accumulated through business activities and a need to more closely consider how such philanthropy is realized on a local level.<sup>3</sup>

To answer these questions, we chart the informal philanthropy of two brothers, John Alexander and Tommy Dewar of the John Dewar and Sons Ltd Scotch whisky company. The origin of family wealth is Dewar's Scotch Whisky, a family business that grew from a local wine and spirits merchant located in Perth into a global, multinational, dominant Scotch whisky brand under the brothers' direction. During the firm's growth, both brothers occupied significant public political roles at local and national levels while steering the company to ever-greater success, massively enriching themselves in the process. However, concomitant with their private and public success in business and politics was an ongoing commitment to their hometown of Perth, manifested first in public service roles (first held by their father who founded the business), then public recognition through ennoblement, followed by informal philanthropic giving to their hometown separate from their company's activities. This provides an important distinction—we define formal giving as that specifically linked to corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of the firm, whereas informal giving is personalized giving that the brothers engaged in individually. For the latter, the brothers' giving was clearly rooted in their hometown of Perth, Scotland despite their national and global success as both politicians and businessmen.

While business historians have increasingly recognized the value of exploring philanthropy in recent years, to date there remains a relative lacuna of studies considering the role of both emotions and place in giving and service within historical contexts. The complexity of the brothers' ability to successfully combine the three activities of business, philanthropy, and politics is indicative of a subtlety of connections between institutions at both a local and global level. By unraveling these connections, we contribute to an enhanced understanding of the importance of economic, social, and political contexts within the philanthropic journey.

2. Harvey, Maclean, Gordon, and Shaw "Andrew Carnegie and the Foundations of Contemporary Entrepreneurial Philanthropy"; MacKenzie, Gordon, and Gannon, "A Spirit of Generosity: Philanthropy in the Scotch Whisky Industry"; Wong and McGovern, "Entrepreneurial Strategies in a Family Business Growth and Capital Conversions in Historical Perspective."

3. Harvey, Maclean and Suddaby "Historical Perspectives on Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy."

## Prosociality and Placed-Based Philanthropy in Business History

The prosocial behaviors of businesspeople are well established, and place-based giving has received growing scholarly attention in the domains of history, business, and philanthropy.<sup>4</sup> We use the definition of prosocial behavior provided by Wittek and Bekkers: “Prosocial behavior is a broad class of behavior defined as involving costs for the self and resulting in benefits for others.”<sup>5</sup> Whether a place is viewed as a locality connected to the business or philanthropist by geographic proximity, or by emotional attachment to a cause or specific community, philanthropists often build connections to locales through endeavors that extend beyond their core business activities. The primary focus of such activity is on improving the well-being and/or development of the communities they are associated with.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the role of community foundations in the United States and the United Kingdom (U.K.) has historically been focused on the regeneration of specific locales and on improving well-being, driven, and supported by formalized collective effort.<sup>7</sup>

There are many historic stories of places that have flourished thanks to their close connections to the efforts of individuals through philanthropic or business means.<sup>8</sup> Many prominent figures have chosen to give back to the communities they are connected to and by whom they have felt nurtured<sup>9</sup> including historic philanthropists successful in business such as Robert Owen (New Lanark, Scotland), William Hesketh Lever (Port Sunlight, England), Titus Salt (Saltaire, England), and George Cadbury (Bournville and Birmingham, England), each of whom remain synonymous with place.<sup>10</sup> All interweaved their business and philanthropic activities, with a focus on development within their communities and the well-being of their employees and their families. There is an explicit recognition of the generative value of such activities to their respective businesses, which is indicative of the generative nature of economic capital creating not only public benefit but benefiting the respective businesses too.<sup>11</sup>

The creation of wealth has fueled philanthropy and charitable giving throughout time, shining light on the philanthropic activities of wealthy elites from the first golden age of

4. Bradley, *Enlightened Entrepreneurs*; Harvey, Maclean, Gordon, and Shaw “Andrew Carnegie and the Foundations of Contemporary Entrepreneurial Philanthropy”; Feldman and Graddy-Reed, “Local Champions: Entrepreneurs’ Transition to Philanthropy and the Vibrancy of Place”; Baumol and Strom, “Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy: Protecting the Public Interest”; Harvey, Maclean and Suddaby, “Historical Perspectives on Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy”; Ridzi, “Place-Based Philanthropy and Measuring Community Well Being in the Age of COVID-19”; Wong and McGovern, “Entrepreneurial Strategies in a Family Business Growth and Capital Conversions in Historical Perspective.”

5. Wittek and Bekkers, “Altruism and Prosocial Behavior.”

6. Ridzi, “Place-Based Philanthropy and Measuring Community Well Being in the Age of COVID-19.”

7. Maclean, Harvey, Gordon, “Social Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship and the Practice of Contemporary Entrepreneurial Philanthropy”; Feldman, and Graddy-Reed. “Local Champions: Entrepreneurs’ Transition to Philanthropy and the Vibrancy of Place.”

8. Feldman and Graddy-Reed, “Local Champions: Entrepreneurs’ Transition to Philanthropy and the Vibrancy of Place.”

9. Bekkers and Wiepking, “A Literature Review of Empirical Studies of Philanthropy: Eight Mechanisms That Drive Charitable Giving”; Harvey, Maclean, and Suddaby, “Historical Perspectives on Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy.”

10. Bradley, *Enlightened Entrepreneurs*.

11. Harvey, Maclean, Gordon, and Shaw. “Andrew Carnegie and the Foundations of Contemporary Entrepreneurial Philanthropy.”

philanthropy (spanning the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries) where—fueled by successful business activities—private contributions to charities more than doubled. At this time philanthropy was the basis of poor relief in England.<sup>12</sup> The second golden age of philanthropy, during the eighteenth century, saw the merchant classes creating and redistributing wealth, funding many hospitals of the time.<sup>13</sup> The third golden age of philanthropy was spurred by industrialization, where wealth became less concentrated in the landed gentry, shifting toward those entrepreneurs who profited from the Industrial Revolution. Some of the enlightened entrepreneurs of that era—as they subsequently became known—focused their philanthropy on specific places, creating purpose-built communities to the benefit of their businesses. Individuals such as the aforementioned Titus Salt and William Hesketh Lever created Saltaire and Port Sunlight respectively, providing housing and education for their workers and families.<sup>14</sup> In this context, such philanthropy may be recognized as enlightened self-interest owing to the generativity of the business.

The fourth golden age of philanthropy spans the end of the Victorian era into the early twentieth century and is aligned with the rise and expansion of the industrial economy in the United States. Rockefeller and Carnegie—whose wealth stemmed from the nation’s burgeoning oil and steel industries—are synonymous with philanthropy from that time.<sup>15</sup> Carnegie, in his philanthropy, pursued partnerships and matched funding from municipalities in the places he sought to establish and fund activities and initiatives, including libraries, then willingly accepted the plaudits and accolades that went with it including fifty-seven freedoms of the city.<sup>16</sup> The fifth golden age of philanthropy is now associated with successful entrepreneurs whose wealth has been created via strong stock markets, innovation, and the advancement of technology.<sup>17</sup> These new philanthropists are increasingly engaged in activities that span continents and with different levels of action and application beyond simply making donations.

The distinction between charity and philanthropy is important here. Charitable giving is associated with helping behavior where the recipient is typically absent from the context of the giver.<sup>18</sup> Philanthropy on the other hand is defined by Moody and Payton as “voluntary action for the public good”<sup>19</sup> with focus firmly placed on generating public benefit. This definition echoes that provided by Rey-Garcia and Puig-Raposo who consider philanthropy as “voluntary private participation in public benefit initiatives.”<sup>20</sup> While public benefit is the aim of

12. Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World*.

13. Bishop, “A Survey on Wealth and Philanthropy.”

14. Bradley, *Enlightened Entrepreneurs*; Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World*.

15. Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World*; Harvey, Maclean, Gordon and Shaw, “Andrew Carnegie and the Foundations of Contemporary Entrepreneurial Philanthropy.”

16. Tweedale, “Carnegie, Andrew (1835–1919), Steelmaker and Philanthropist.”

17. Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World*.

18. Bekkers and Wiepking, “A Literature Review of Empirical Studies of Philanthropy: Eight Mechanisms that Drive Charitable Giving.”

19. Moody and Payton, “Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission,” 27.

20. Rey-Garcia and Puig-Raposo, “Globalisation and the Organisation of Family Philanthropy: A Case of Isomorphism,” 1019.

philanthropy, there are typically intangible benefits to the philanthropist from engaging in the act, which enriches their life and stimulates an evergreen cycle of public benefit activities.<sup>21</sup>

Recent studies in business and history have adopted a critical view of the generative nature of philanthropy<sup>22</sup> where elite philanthropists seek to “extend their reach into the realm of the social as a means of personal aggrandizement”<sup>23</sup> via formal institutions. Philanthropy comes in many forms and generates not only social, economic, human, and symbolic capital for the individual but also importantly power. Consistent therein is the argument that there is a spectrum of benefits generated not only for the public but the individual philanthropist and their formal vehicle of wealth creation that stems from engaging in the act of philanthropy itself, though arguably this may be associated more with both a formal vehicle and driven by a public profile in philanthropy.<sup>24</sup> Public benefit generated by philanthropy has historically been linked to a broad range of societal areas including education, healthcare, support of the vulnerable, religion, and local community enhancement.<sup>25</sup> It is the latter on which we turn our attention in this paper through an analysis of the place-based philanthropic giving and service by John Alexander and Tommy Dewar, scions of the Dewar Scotch Whisky business in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Contemporary philanthropic activity is often associated with place as highlighted by the work of Feldman<sup>26</sup> who considers the connection between place, entrepreneurs, and philanthropy and who further emphasizes institutional creation as an output. Feldman uses the phrase “local champions” (akin to our use of “local patriots” in the context of the Dewars within this study), and her emphasis on the productivity of the connections and agency that entrepreneurs bring to philanthropy in communities aligns closely with the work of Schervish<sup>27</sup> who details the generative nature of agency that wealthy donors bring to their philanthropic endeavors. Schervish views agency as multidimensional, where social connections are not limited to the domain of business but extend into politics, public service duties, and beyond, and posits that wealthy entrepreneurs have a skills repertoire to draw upon—alongside informal and formal connections—that can be deployed to achieve progressive, purposeful outcomes for the public benefit.<sup>28</sup>

21. Maclean, Harvey, Gordon and Shaw “Identity, Storytelling and the Philanthropic Journey”; Harvey, Maclean and Suddaby “Historical Perspectives on Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy.”

22. Harvey, Maclean and Suddaby “Historical Perspectives on Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy.”

23. Harvey, Maclean, Gordon, and Shaw “Andrew Carnegie and the Foundations of Contemporary Entrepreneurial Philanthropy.”

24. Harvey, Maclean, Gordon, and Shaw “Andrew Carnegie and the Foundations of Contemporary Entrepreneurial Philanthropy.”

25. Davies, *How Philanthropy Shapes Britain*, Harvey, Maclean and Suddaby “Historical Perspectives on Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy.”

26. Feldman and Graddy-Reed, “Local Champions: Entrepreneurs’ Transition to Philanthropy and the Vibrancy of Place”; Feldman and Zoller, “Dealmakers in place: Social capital connections in regional entrepreneurial economies.”

27. Schervish, O’Herlihy and Havens, “Agent-Animated Wealth and Philanthropy: The Dynamics of Accumulation and Allocation Among High-Tech Donors”; Schevish, “High-Tech Donors and Their Impact on Philanthropy: The Conventional, Novel and Strategic Traits of Agent-Animated Wealth and Philanthropy.”

28. Schervish, “High-Tech Donors and Their Impact on Philanthropy: The Conventional, Novel and Strategic Traits of Agent-Animated Wealth and Philanthropy.”

Emphasis on the role of civic duty and public service bears importance here in the context of the Dewars story; both John Alexander and Tommy developed political profiles at local and national levels during their lifetime. The combination of knowledge, experience, and contacts merged from business, philanthropy, and politics is not unusual in the context of generating transformative value for specific locales<sup>29</sup> and is well-documented beyond the individual micro level, by the many historical and contemporary community place-based foundations that exist.<sup>30</sup> However, what is synonymous in the context of place-based philanthropy is the apparent sense of stewardship and emotional attachment that individuals linked to a family business feel towards a community. It can be argued that the act of giving back is therefore formed from within the family unit and community institutions.<sup>31</sup>

Our analysis of the Dewar brothers shows the independence of their philanthropic activities from their business and is indicative of how they preferred to compartmentalize their different foci. Our attention is on their informal philanthropy, combined with the public service roles they held. We view their philanthropy as informal in the sense that the acts themselves typically involved the brothers making donations to causes they considered important, spanning religion, homelessness, poverty relief, education, and the protection of open space and land within the context of their hometown of Perth, Scotland.

## Sources and Methods

Research for this article was conducted across multiple archives, including the John Dewar & Sons Corporate Archive, the Dewar family's private archive, the Scoon and Perth No. 3 Masonic Lodge, St Johnstone Football Club, the National Records of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, and newspaper databases (British Library and British Newspaper Archive) comprising both local and national news reports. Newspapers have long been identified as a useful historical source, but less typically in business history.<sup>32</sup> The nature of the Dewar brothers' philanthropy that we analyzed was informal—this means there are no surviving private records documenting the details of the giving, requiring us instead to piece together their story from contemporaneous newspaper reports of the time. We did not have access to any diaries, papers, notes, or other ephemera that might reveal motivations on the brothers' parts beyond what public utterances they made via the popular press of the day. Recent work by Tinning and Lubinski is relevant in terms of the lack of “ego documents”<sup>33</sup> that may belie familial motivations for service and giving beyond public pronouncements.

29. Harvey, Maclean, Gordon, and Shaw “Andrew Carnegie and the Foundations of Contemporary Entrepreneurial Philanthropy.”

30. Maclean, Harvey, Gordon, “Social Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship and the Practice of Contemporary Entrepreneurial Philanthropy.”

31. Avineri and de-Shalit, *Communitarianism and Individualism*; Harvey Gordon and Maclean “The Ethics of Entrepreneurial Philanthropy.”

32. Bowie, “Contextual Analysis and Newspaper Archives in Management History Research”; Heller and Rowlinson “Imagined Corporate Communities: Historical Sources and Discourses”; Nix and Decker “Using Digital Sources: The Future of Business History?”

33. Tinning and Lubinski “Ego-Documents in Management and Organizational History.”

As there are none, we had to instead construct our understanding through triangulation with other sources and draw inferences accordingly.

In line with Per Hansen's work on newspapers as sources<sup>34</sup>, we sought to utilize the reporting on the Dewars' philanthropy as a way of solving our problem of capturing their informal giving by using newspaper reports for establishment and confirmation purposes of the brothers' giving and service. The contemporary newspaper reports provide records and details (to an extent) of what and how the brothers sought to serve and give. While several of these accounts have been digitized and are available through online databases such as the British Newspaper Archive, through the Dewar family's own private archive we were also able to read their collection of newspaper clippings documenting principally local newspaper reports of the brothers' giving, public service activities, and their engagement in the local communities in which they were active. Their public office and service are a matter of public record and serve as a guide to their activities. The corporate archives of John Dewar & Sons Ltd provided us with materials on the company's history including the early family involvement, newspaper reports on the brothers' activities, its financial performance, corporate sponsorships, and financial data showing growth and development into one of the world's most successful Scotch whisky companies. Finally, the archives of the local Masonic lodge and St Johnstone Football Club allowed us to establish their associations further evidencing their strong local connections in the biographical sketches interspersed with the story of their company's growth that follows.

### Young Men of Vision—John Alexander and Tommy Dewar

John Alexander was only 24 years old, and Tommy was 16 when their father died in 1880. Both had benefitted from a school education (attending Sharp's Institution Perth, which later merged with Perth Academy) and a technical education in the industry, serving apprenticeships with other drinks merchants (as was common in the industry at the time) earning their way through to the family business succession. John Alexander had worked for Condamines of Leith in Edinburgh, and Tommy with Forrest & Turnbull (also of Leith) as well as the influential Scotch whisky company Robertson & Baxter in Glasgow.<sup>35</sup> Upon his father's death, John Alexander entered a new copartnership with his mother Jane to run the business that lasted until 1887. Tommy joined in 1881 as an equal partner, with the business turning a profit of £1321.<sup>36</sup> In 1888, the name of the company was updated again from John Dewar to John Dewar & Sons.<sup>37</sup> The brothers' education in the industry would serve them both very well, helping them to accelerate what was a modestly successful family business with strong domestic performance into a rapid growth business with a global footprint firmly rooted in their home city of Perth.

34. Hansen "Writing Business History Without an Archive."

35. Weir "Dewar."

36. John Dewar & Sons Ltd. Financial Development 1880/81-1930. Information from balance sheets and profit and loss accounts. John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.

37. Dewar's Corporate History Presentation. (n.d.) John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.



*John Alexander*

Following in his father's footsteps of public service, shortly after joining the family business John Alexander embarked on his own career of public service comprising both local and national roles. Locally, in 1883 at the age of 27, he became a member of Perth Town Council. In 1884 he was confirmed as a member of the Masonic Lodge Scoon & Perth No.3, registered as a "Wine Merchant," with his brother Tommy joining later in 1889 as a "Whisky Merchant," but still resident in London. Neither attained higher office in their local lodge.<sup>38</sup> John Alexander later became the convenor of the Housing Committee of Perthshire County Council, then finally the Lord Provost of the City in 1893 (a role his son John Jr. would later fulfill at the same age of 37 from 1922-25<sup>39</sup>) serving until 1899.<sup>40</sup> John Alexander also served as Justice of the Peace (a volunteer judicial role in a lower, local court) and the Deputy Lieutenant (the Queen's representative) of Perthshire.<sup>41</sup> In each of these roles, he contributed to the running of the city as well as civic improvements including sanitation, water supply, swimming baths, leisure amenities, gasworks construction, slum clearances, housebuilding, development of the harbor, and street and bridge building, following in the footsteps of his father's commitment to civic duties for the city. The roles of Lord Provost and Deputy Lieutenant are particularly important here—the former was a key local role, but the latter illustrates a connection to the upper echelons of the British establishment as a Crown appointment by the reigning monarch. This illustrates that John Alexander was not just locally connected but was gaining national recognition also and arguably generating considerable symbolic and social capital from such an appointment for leverage in the business. In 1897, the brothers reconstructed John Dewar & Sons as a public company, with £600,000 of shares issued. By this time, they had offices in London, New York, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Edinburgh, and Dublin.<sup>42</sup> In 1898 they opened the Aberfeldy Distillery (which is still owned by Dewar's to this day). By 1900 the company also reached an important milestone of selling 1 million proof gallons in a single year (535,000 standard 12-bottle cases) of its Scotch whisky for the first time.<sup>43</sup> By 1914, they had additional offices in Calcutta, Sydney, Melbourne, and Johannesburg<sup>44</sup>, demonstrating the brothers' continued global expansion.

The national connections did not stop at locally endowed honorific titles connected to the British establishment, however. John Alexander also served as a member of Parliament in the U.K. House of Commons from 1900 to 1916 for Inverness-shire representing the Liberal Party and winning the only Liberal seat in the 1900 election in Scotland<sup>45</sup> before being knighted in 1902. John Alexander's public activities were recognized with a baronetcy in 1907, before fronting a campaign for a reduction in spirits duty from the 1909 People's Budget and

38. Correspondence with Scoon & Perth No. 3 Masonic Lodge.

39. Seargeant, "Dewar's Perth Whisky: The Origins of a Global Brand," 93.

40. *The Wine Trade Review – Supplement*. (1926). "Romance of the Whisky trade," pg. 29. From the Dewar Family Archive.

41. UK Who's Who, "Forteviot."

42. Dewar's Corporate History Presentation (n.d.), John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.

43. Buxton, *The Enduring Legacy of Dewars: A Company History*, 25.

44. Bower and Higgins, "Litigation and Lobbying in Support of the Marque: The Scotch Whisky Association, c. 1945–c. 1990."

45. Weir, "Dewar, John Alexander, first Baron Forteviot."



becoming a spokesman for the whisky trade (one of the few explicit links to his business present in his public service). In 1910, he purchased the Dupplin Estate from the estate of the Earl of Kinnoull for £249,000<sup>46</sup> and then chaired commissions into medical services in the Scottish Highlands and Islands (1912), establishing early principles for what would later become the U.K.'s National Health Service. In 1915, he was made Chairman of the Territorial Forces Association after giving use of Aberdalgie House on his estate to the Red Cross for convalescents during World War One, serving until 1919.<sup>47</sup> He was elevated once again becoming Baron Forteviot of Dupplin in the peerage in 1917, the first of the Whisky Barons.<sup>48</sup> Thus, while John Alexander's public service duties started locally before moving to the national stage, he remained steadfastly rooted in his hometown. His brother Tommy on the other hand worked his way through public service roles with his base in London, mirroring the company's growth and development and his place in it.

### Tommy

In 1885, just four years after joining the family business, Tommy moved to London to open the company's new office in line with their growth expansion plans. Within a year of moving to London Tommy was appointed as a one-third share partner in the business in 1886. Tommy's move to London was part of the brothers' strategy for growth—the London office was to act as a base for the global expansion of the business. As the first city of the Empire and already a global trading hub, London was an ideal location for the brothers to expand their business and start to realize their growth ambitions. This was aided by a request from Andrew Carnegie who in 1891 ordered a “small keg...of the best Scotch whisky you can find” for Benjamin Harrison, then President of the United States<sup>49</sup>, marking Dewar's first export and a new growth market for the product.<sup>50</sup> In *The Wine Trade Review – Supplement* an article on the brothers' ambitions and strategic moves talked about both London and “His Majesty's Dominions” as the principal foci for the brothers, but the challenge they faced overseas was that Dewars was not a brand well-known brand to distributors. Tommy was reputed to have said to these firms “If this whisky does not sell, send the whole darned lot back at my expense.”<sup>51</sup>

For many ambitious British companies at the time, exploiting both domestic connections and imperial ties and trade was a common route to growth. For the Dewar brothers, it was further exploited by Tommy's book *Ramble Round the Globe*—a published travelogue of his 1892 journey around twenty-six different countries where he secured thirty-two different distribution agents for the business over a period of 2 years, including many Empire territories.<sup>52</sup> The book also reveals the importance of imperial connections to the brothers' strategy for growth—Tommy's principal destinations were current and former colonies with a view to exploiting the administrations' (and locals') newfound thirst for Scotch. This led to the

46. November 30, 1929, Obituary. *Scottish Farmer*. Dewar Family Archive.

47. January 9, 1915, *Dundee Courier*.

48. Weir, “Dewar, John Alexander, first Baron Forteviot.”

49. Order letter from Andrew Carnegie to Dewar's. September 21, 1891. John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.

50. Buxton, *The Enduring Legacy of Dewars: A Company History*, 19.

51. *The Wine Trade Review – Supplement*. (1926). ‘Romance of the Whisky Trade’, 29. From the Dewar Family Archive.

52. Dewar, *Ramble Around the Globe*.

company opening its first office in the United States in New York City in 1892.<sup>53</sup> By 1893 Dewar's had secured Queen Victoria's Royal Warrant for supplying whisky to the Royal Household.<sup>54</sup> These achievements saw the company's profitability jump markedly to £17,862 by 1893.<sup>55</sup>

Utilizing early marketing tricks to enhance the visibility of the brand and himself, Tommy soon emerged as a well-known figure in London and beyond. In 1892 he served on the London County Council for West Marylebone, before becoming a Lieutenant (the Queen's representative), then the Sheriff of the City of London in 1897, then a Justice of the Peace for Kent in 1898. During this time, Dewars launched the world's first cinematic advert for a drinks product in 1897.<sup>56</sup> First shown on the roof of the Pepper building in New York's Herald Square, the commercial was created by the International Film Company and featured characters acting out "The Whisky of his Forefathers" painting already widely used by the firm for promotion and advertising purposes.<sup>57</sup> The year after, the company followed this up with what was reputed to be the world's largest illuminated sign depicting a Scotsman in his kilt drinking Dewar's whisky—on the Shot Tower (which it had acquired for premises) next to London's Waterloo Bridge. This was replaced by another sign in 1910/11, which was illuminated and mechanical, depicting a Scotsman drinking whisky that was 68 feet tall and composed of fourteen hundred lamps and 6 miles of electric cable.<sup>58</sup>

Tommy was elected as Conservative and Unionist Member of Parliament (M.P.) for the St George's division of Tower Hamlet in 1900 (serving until 1906) and was knighted in 1902. He was elevated to baronet in 1917.<sup>59</sup> Just two years earlier and in order to combat increasing taxation (partly a result of Lloyd George's temperance enthusiasm against alcohol<sup>60</sup>) and competition, Dewar's merged with Buchanan's (with both companies retaining their separate identities) with capital of £5 million<sup>61</sup> and named Scotch Whisky Brands Ltd the following year, subsequently renamed to Buchanan-Dewar in 1919. This was the same year Tommy was made Baron Dewar of Homestall (named for his estate in Surrey)<sup>62</sup> and recognized "for public services and work on numerous hospital committees."<sup>63</sup> Tommy's political rise was remarkable not least due to the concomitant global growth and success of the family business. In 1919 Tommy was elevated to Baron Dewar (three years after his brother), and the company was turning a profit of £943,690.<sup>64</sup> Shortly thereafter in 1925, the "Big Amalgamation" of the Big Three Scotch whisky blenders of Dewar's, Buchanan's, and Walker's formed the industry

53. Dewar's Corporate History Presentation. (n.d.) John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.

54. Morrice, *The Schweppes Guide to Scotch*, 207.

55. John Dewar & Sons Ltd. Financial Development 1880/81-1930. Information from balance sheets and profit and loss accounts. John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.

56. Dewar's Scotch Whisky: An early cinematic advert. National Library of Scotland.

57. Dewar's Corporate History Presentation. (n.d.) John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.

58. MacLean, *MacLean's Miscellany of Whisky*, 196; March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1911, *The Graphic*.

59. June 4, 1917, *Glasgow Herald*. Dewar Family Archive.

60. Bower, "Scotch Whisky: History, Heritage and the Stock Cycle."

61. Glen, "An Economic History of the Distilling Industry in Scotland, 1750-1914."

62. Weir, "Dewar, John Alexander, First Baron Forteviot."

63. April 29, 1919. *Belfast News*. Dewar Family Archive.

64. John Dewar & Sons Ltd. Financial Development 1880/81-1930. Information from balance sheets and profit and loss accounts. John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.

behemoth the Distiller's Company Limited, with each retaining their own brand identity. By this point Dewar's were turning a profit of £1.284 million<sup>65</sup> and the brothers were not just locally known, but nationally and internationally recognized as principal figures within the Scotch whisky industry known as the "Whisky Barons."

### Local Patriots—the Dewars' Place-Based Giving

After both John Alexander and Tommy reached the heights of the British establishment within both their respective locales—Perth and London, respectively—and nationally, they turned their attention to philanthropy. The Dewar brothers' infestments and giving were recognized in the obituary of Tommy whereby *The Courier* wrote "In common with the late Lord For-teviot, he retained throughout his business career, amid honors gained mainly in London, a deep-seated regard for his native city."<sup>66</sup> Their emotional commitment to their hometown extended to significant gifting covering a range of causes. It is worth noting that these actions were not directly related to their company—Dewar's had its own sponsorships and CSR activities separate from the brothers' giving.<sup>67</sup> John Alexander and Tommy gave on a private, individual, and informal basis—neither held a formal giving vehicle at any point so gave from their private wealth. This makes tracking their giving challenging—there is no single document, diary, company minutes, or consolidation of their actions available to historians to capture their philanthropy. Thus, to establish the nature and extent of their philanthropy we pieced together their giving from contemporaneous newspaper accounts, drawn from digitized sources (the British Library and British Newspaper Archive), the John Dewar & Sons Ltd corporate archive, and the Dewar Family Archive. This allowed us to compose a picture and chronology of their giving activities, presented in [Tables 1](#) and [2](#) in the appendix.

The nature of their giving in life and death provides key insights into the Dewar brothers' interests and values. John Alexander's baronial motto<sup>68</sup>, "*Pro rege, lege, grege* – 'For the King, Law, Clan'," identifies three things he wanted to be publicly known for: loyalty to the Crown, the British state, and his family. Consistent within this proclamation is the story of John Alexander's business and personal lives—his company grew on the back of Empire ties, he worked closely with and within the British establishment at local and national levels, and finally he and Tommy worked together very closely in the family business to bring this together. Tommy's baronial motto was "*Gloria Patri*—'Glory Be to the Father'," recognizing the origins of his start in business and his Presbyterian faith. Both recognized and gave significant funds to St John's Kirk in Perth in its redevelopment as a war memorial—both grew up as members of that church. Similarly, John Alexander also gave to Aberdalgie Church (on his Dupplin estate), and Tommy attended the Church of Scotland in London. The brothers' ties to British and Scottish institutions are obvious from their public service roles and

65. John Dewar & Sons Ltd. Financial Development 1880/81-1930. Information from balance sheets and profit and loss accounts. John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.

66. Saturday April 12, 1930. "Lord Dewar Dead," *The Courier and Advertiser*. Dewar Family Archive.

67. Buxton, *The Enduring Legacy of Dewars: a company history*, 60.

68. When appointed as a baron, individuals are permitted a coat of arms and an accompanying motto.

recognition, but their giving illustrates deeper connections to their hometown and a sense of place beyond the generative values derived from their public roles.

There are other interesting aspects to the giving outlined in the timeline, including building on their father's activities in developing Perth as a city. John Alexander followed in his father's footsteps as Lord Provost and held various other city-level roles overseeing public improvements, which he identified as a "privilege" to have been able to do. John Alexander committed significant personal funds to the extension of the Perth Royal Infirmary through the construction and kitting out of a new maternity ward, he gave extensively to fund the construction of two new homeless hostels, and he gave both money and several hundred books to the city library—all of which are still in operation today. Tommy was no less generous in his beneficence to the city and its denizens—the gift of Kinnoull Hill was remarkably generous, but also in its foresight with the endowment of funds in perpetuity to support its upkeep, as well as the purchase and gift of the Barnhill estate southwest of the hill to provide access. Tommy's flair for marketing extended to commissioning his old school friend, artist W.M. Frazer, to paint a panoramic scene of Perth (as viewed from the hill) as the basis of a new tourism marketing campaign for the city. It is worth noting that John Alexander's son, John Jr., subsequently also served as Lord Provost of the city, and himself gifted land to create an eighteen-hole golf course therein (and fishing rights alongside the course).<sup>69</sup>

Each of these gifts had (and continue to have) a significant effect on the city in terms of amenity and economic development contributions. John Jr.'s position as Lord Provost is important as it ensured the brothers and family retained a strong connection with the governance of Perth and a direct line to understanding the city's needs. Regarding the maternity ward, infertment of Kinnoull Hill and associated lands, and the golf course, all three occurred at a time when the local authorities had expressed interest in doing it themselves but were concerned about financial constraints. The brothers' willingness to give to the city allowed local authorities to spend in other areas. This led to one newspaper article describing them in 1923 thusly: "Lord Forteviot and his brother are, of course, both natives of the Fair City, and are in every respect splendid examples of local patriots."<sup>70</sup>

Their giving did not go unnoticed, nor were attempts at reward absent. Newspaper reports of their gifts are often written in fawning and obsequious language but nevertheless reveal potential motivations for the brothers' giving. In 1924, the brothers were offered, and declined, the freedom of the city of Perth by the Town Council. Both wrote letters in response to the Town Clerk that were published in the local press, outlining their reasons for declining the honor. Both brothers were characteristic in their responses: John Alexander was to the point in his letter limiting himself to two short paragraphs, whereas Tommy was somewhat more loquacious, writing four long paragraphs. The following excerpts from the news story outline their reasons for declining. John Alexander wrote:

"I have given the matter most earnest consideration, and I write to say that I hope, with much respect, the Town Council will allow me to decline the much too high honor they have so kindly offered. The pleasure of being allowed to help my native city is in itself sufficient

69. October 11, 1923, *The Courier*, 10.

70. December 10, 1923, *Evening Telegraph*, 5.

reward for any little service I may have rendered, but the people of Perth have always been so kind to me that they have far more repaid anything I have been able to do.”

Tommy's response demonstrated a similar sentiment (while recognizing his location in London):

“I have unfortunately not been able to keep up that close and intimate touch with my fellow-citizens which I should have liked to have done from the date I left school... Any little I have done does not rebound in attribute to me but is born of a fellowship of aims and ideals, which I owe to the bonds of that citizenship which unites us. I feel that in every respect compared to others I am a debtor. Anything I have done or may be able to do in the future for my native city will remain a pleasure and an abiding joy that will more than compensate me.”<sup>71</sup>

Public recognition in the form of freedom of the city was a typical reward or outcome for wealthy businessmen who embarked upon philanthropic giving to their locales during this period. The reluctance of the brothers to accept local rewards for their giving was, however, unusual. Other local industrialists and businessmen were recognized for their service and philanthropy and accepted the freedom of the city including the whisky magnate A.K. Bell of Bell's Scotch Whisky<sup>72</sup>, Sir Francis Norie-Miller who led the General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Association<sup>73</sup>, Sir Robert Pullar of the Pullar Dyeworks<sup>74</sup>, and Andrew Carnegie<sup>75</sup> (who was renowned for routinely collecting such awards). Acceptance of such reward for philanthropic endeavors supports the premise of the returns from philanthropy as developed by recent scholarship, but how then do we characterize or understand activities and actors that do not fit so easily with this understanding? The brothers' unwillingness to accept the offer of the freedom of the city of Perth does not suggest their personal giving was wholly altruistic, but it does complicate the accepted wisdom that giving is undertaken to receive a capital return. The brothers occupied an already elevated public position via their political careers, their economic wealth, and their commensurate power, but their localized giving does not seem to significantly enhance their public position or their business.

In stark contrast to their refusal of local honors was the Dewars' willingness to accept national recognition through their elevations to the House of Lords and the Peerage via roles as M.P.s and local roles where they lived. These showed they were not averse to accepting public recognition for their service, but were definitive in their refusal of recognition by the city for their giving. Their refusal to accept the freedom of the city also did little to quell their willingness to keep giving—as both tables show, the brothers continued to give significant amounts to the city and the surrounding environs after declining the honor, suggesting that their stated reasons for doing so were not based on any discontent with the city or its administration. It is worth reiterating that the brothers gave on a personal, individual basis to causes

71. June 11, 1924, *The Courier*, 'Modest Perth Benefactors', pg. 4. May 30, 1924, *Glasgow Herald* and June 12, 1924, *Glasgow Herald*.

72. Duncan, *A Roof Over One's Head*, 16-33.

73. Pearson, "Miller, Sir Francis Norie-, first baronet (1859–1947)."

74. Davies, "Pullar, Sir Robert (1828–1912)."

75. October 9, 1902. *The Times*. London. "Mr. Carnegie at Perth," 4.

and interests they saw fit, in a separate fashion from their company's own giving and CSR activities.<sup>76</sup> The company is never credited with their informal giving, but only ever mentioned as the source of the brothers' wealth. It operated separate CSR activities throughout the period sponsoring various activities, including for example sports competitions, all over the country.<sup>77</sup>

Equally, it is unclear if the giving was a defensive mechanism to offset criticisms of the business from temperance campaigners—Weir points out that blenders (including Dewars) made little to no attempt to counter the temperance movement stating “from the business records of the blenders it would be easy to believe that the temperance movement never existed”<sup>78</sup>—there is never any mention of the movement or defending the industry in the press reports of the brothers' giving. There is no question that their business success was generative and allowed the brothers to give in the way that they did. The personal wealth generated through business activities, alongside the social and symbolic capital, gained and converted from their significant public and political roles and activities arguably held a generative effect in the domains of business, politics, and high society to their benefit. A possible explanation of this is the international export focus and its profitability—in 1912 Dewars calculated that the net profit on their exports was 52% compared with 14% on domestic sales.<sup>79</sup> Their operations in Perth were thus focused on getting their product bottled and packaged to get the majority of it overseas as quickly as possible. However, their personal philanthropy appears to be discrete, distinct, and contextually localized from activities undertaken in support of the firm.

### The Emotional Connection to Place

The notion of place-based service is critical to understanding localized needs, with this evidenced in various public service duties John Alexander undertook in his home city of Perth, prior to his and his brother's philanthropic giving to the city. John Alexander's sustained public service and giving over time, and the key roles he occupied over and above running a highly successful business, enabled him to influence the shape of the Perth improvement works, covering not just the waterworks but sanitation, transport, and road infrastructure, housing provision, and maternity care within the city, as well as significant contributions via aligned philanthropy, and is indicative of the generative nature of public service for the benefit of the community. Tommy's public service in London ensured his networks in the capital at the heart of the Empire were strong which, in turn, likely helped the business. Moreover, his rambles around the world perhaps further exposed and emphasized to him the contextual importance of place, locales, and their specific needs. Both brothers served in national political roles for which their elevation to the Peerage via various titles bestowed upon them were recognized—in each case they were given their knighthoods, baronetcies, and finally their baron titles in recognition of their significant public service. It is important to

76. Correspondence with Jacqui Seargeant, John Dewar and Sons Ltd company archivist. March 25, 2022.

77. Corporate sponsorship list. John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.

78. Weir, “The Distilling Industry in Scotland in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” 563.

79. Weir, “The Distilling Industry in Scotland in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.”



recognize here the similarly elevated political circles in which both brothers moved—John Alexander as a Liberal, and Tommy as a Conservative and Unionist. Both parties were the dominant political movements in the U.K. at the time, and the brothers were very well-networked within them sitting first in the House of Commons, then the House of Lords.

With their success came ever-increasing calls on their time—both John Alexander and Tommy refer to this in public utterances. John Alexander was quoted “I can assure you I feel very keenly the severing of my connection with the work of the City Council, work which for the last fourteen years has filled so large a place in my life. I esteem it the greatest privilege of my life to have been permitted to take part in it, and I know of no sphere where the ordinary average citizen can better or more profitably serve his generation.”<sup>80</sup> Tommy addresses his own commitment thusly, “Well gentlemen, my absence has not been brought about by politics. It was commerce that caused me to place my footsteps on the border facing South, the same as has been done by many a needy son of Caledonia, and it is commerce that has kept me away from my native city for so long.”<sup>81</sup> Both brothers recognized the demands of their business but remained committed to giving to their hometown as evidenced in [Table 1](#).

There was a generative personal benefit from their public service as both were recognized for this in their ennoblements. However, establishing a personally generative connection or motivation to their giving is more difficult. Timing is relevant here. They were ennobled for their public service before they started giving in earnest. The brothers were running a globally successful export-focused business, which generated enormous revenues and personal financial benefits which they then used in turn to the benefit of their hometown in later years. An important part of the reason for the growth of their business was the connection to the British Empire and indeed their (or perhaps Tommy's) willingness to engage in building networks to establish trading outposts. In this sense, the generative dimension of their business activities can be found in the political capital they developed as visible, active, and engaged Members of Parliament for the leading political parties of the time. What this means for the dimension of place, is that the global became local in terms of the fruits of the brothers' labor and their willingness to donate and foster the economic and social development of their hometown. Tommy alluded to this: “I'm very conscious I have done little to deserve this banquet—except perhaps, in directing the attention of people who can read that my name is now inseparably associated with the name of Perth.”<sup>82</sup>

Echoing the roots of the communitarian ethos of customary philanthropy,<sup>83</sup> place-based philanthropy is aligned with the collective narrative of the needs of the community. In the Dewars' case, the interweaving of agency derived from the family's business endeavors, local and national politics, and philanthropy was harnessed to steward and develop their hometown of Perth, Scotland. The generativity of the combination of local and national civic duty, via local and national political roles employed by both brothers and combined with their

80. JAD quoted in his obituary. November 27, 1909, *Perthshire Advertiser*. ‘Obituary’. Dewar Family Archive.

81. Quote from an article on a dinner held in Perth celebrating the brothers' achievements in *Perthshire Constitutional*, October 12, 1924. ‘Sir Thomas R. Dewar M.P. in Perth’. Dewar Family Archive.

82. Quote from an article on a dinner held in Perth celebrating the brothers' achievements in *Perthshire Constitutional*, October 12, 1924. ‘Sir Thomas R. Dewar M.P. in Perth’. Dewar Family Archive.

83. Harvey Gordon and Maclean “The ethics of entrepreneurial philanthropy.”



business activity and philanthropy, helped inform their understanding of local needs, driving the social and economic development of their hometown that in turn built a legacy for the people of Perth that endures today. This was undertaken without any evident link to the productivity of the family business itself, which stands out when compared with the activities of the enlightened entrepreneurs of that time whose philanthropy can be related to the benefit of their vehicle of wealth creation. The brothers' strong emotional attachment to their hometown of Perth was a key driver of their philanthropy. When celebrating the opening of the new maternity ward he helped found, John Alexander was quoted as saying "He confessed he was rather embarrassed with the generosity of their appreciation and he had only to say that it gave a great deal of pleasure, and it was a great honour to his wife and himself, to be able to help the Directors to carry out their good work."<sup>84</sup>

This suggests that emotional context fueled the informal philanthropic activities of the brothers. The emotional connection felt by the brothers to their hometown and their communitarian ethos is important considering their business was international and export-oriented. The brothers could have directed their informal giving anywhere their business activities exposed them to, and more so given Tommy's ramblings around the world. However, they chose to focus on the place where they were born, grew up, and whose collective needs they understood just as other local businessmen had done before them. Tommy recognizes this in himself "The truth is for the last twenty years I have not had a great deal of spare time on my hands... Although I have been going to and fro on the surfaces of the earth for about a quarter of a century... your kind reception encourages me to believe that I have a home and that I am at home."<sup>85</sup> What distinguishes their giving to their hometown from others is their refusal to take honor for it and its apparent disconnect with their business operations. Their personal giving sits entirely separate from their business but is facilitated by proceeds from it.

The Dewars were undoubtedly exposed to local and international role models whose footsteps they followed in. Several philanthropists were active in the city—John Sharp a baker who established Sharp's Institution where the Dewar brothers were educated, Professor Archibald Sandeman who gave a bequest to establish the eponymously named library in the city, Sir Robert Pullar (of the eponymous dye-works) who gave to establish a sanatorium and public wash house, and Rachel Pennycook who gave to improve the local fire brigade with the purchase of new fire trucks.<sup>86</sup> During the ceremony to commemorate Tommy's gift of Kinnoull Hill to the city, his nephew the then Lord Provost John Jr. recognizing this history of local giving, said "there seemed to be an undefinable something in the atmosphere of the ancient city that compelled those whose lives had been spent within its walls to express in the most tangible form their appreciation of the privilege it was to be a citizen of Perth."<sup>87</sup>

Given the brothers' dual local and national foci in their prosocial actions, it is also worth considering their national peers like William Hesketh Lever, who built Port Sunlight as a model village in the late nineteenth century to accommodate the workers of his soap business,

84. January 12, 1927, *Perthshire Constitutional and Journal*.

85. October 12, 1924, *Perthshire Constitutional and Journal*.

86. March 14, 1927, *Evening Telegraph*, 26.

87. March 11, 1924, *The Courier*. "Perth's Public Legacies," 5.

Lever Brothers (the predecessor of Unilever).<sup>88</sup> Port Sunlight represents Lever's vision to create decent and sanitary housing in an industrial setting for his workers. It bears similarity to Robert Owen, in New Lanark Mills, who undertook significant work to improve the housing and social conditions (including education) of the mill workers. Moreover, it also echoes the philanthropic activities of George Cadbury<sup>89</sup> and Joseph Rowntree<sup>90</sup> who embarked on a particular form of philanthropy and industrial welfarism in Bournville and York respectively. While Bournville was a model village built in 1879 to house the factory workers of Cadbury in a garden setting with significant recreational space, Rowntree's factory in York focused on creating a holistic offering within the workplace to ensure worker's welfare was accounted for in his factories, alongside the creation of sick and provident funds, medical services, pension schemes, and educational schools for children. Each focused on place and community but with the wealth-creating vehicle firmly at the center. These entrepreneurs merged the socio-economic elements of their need to create wealth and the responsibility that it brought while being cognizant of the human agency interweaved with their drive for private wealth and the need to ensure basic social needs were met. Tommy and John Alexander knew Andrew Carnegie and his giving as well<sup>91</sup> but eschewed his approach of building alliances with matched funding and seeking concomitant rewards.

## Conclusion

Place-based service and giving were second nature to the Dewar brothers during and after achieving business success—recognizing that there may be prosocial actions undertaken by business historical figures that are not about the pursuit of growth or profit is an area of potentially very rich inquiry for business historians that can illuminate networks, motivations, activities, and the lasting impact on places therein. The Dewar brothers' clear emotional connection to their hometown over the course of their lives illustrates this. By combining the spatial and temporal dimensions of this kind of research, business historians have much to offer and explore in these spaces.

Our analysis of the Dewar family's service and giving over the period in question was drawn principally from newspaper sources that have not been utilized in business history to the same extent as in other historical disciplines. Per Hansen raised the importance of recognizing the problem you are seeking to resolve by using newspapers as a source. Our problem was establishing the extent and value of the brothers' informal giving—since no surviving archives capture the brothers' motivation for giving, we had to work with public accounts of their activities and public utterances regarding them. This neatly captured the direction Hansen gave to business historians in using newspapers as sources but also allowed us to triangulate

88. <https://www.portsunlightvillage.com/about-port-sunlight/history-and-heritage/#:-:text=Port%20Sunlight%20is%20arguably%20the,acres%20of%20parkland%20and%20gardens>.

89. Williams and Fitzgerald, "Rowntree."

90. Williams and Fitzgerald, "Rowntree."

91. Buxton, *The Enduring Legacy of Dewars: A Company History*, 48.

and develop our narrative in line with the company's own growth story and the various archival materials we could access elsewhere.

Feldman argues that “what matters most is human agency—the building of institutions and the myriad of public and private decisions that determine the character of a place.”<sup>92</sup> We posit that the contextual knowledge generated from the local and national political roles of John Alexander and Tommy acted as both a driver of understanding localized and community needs and an enabler to work holistically to address them by entering partnerships with local government to support public initiatives in local healthcare and housing. In terms of a return, their ennoblement for public service clearly contributed to their symbolic position, but their personal localized giving is much more difficult to ascribe a return to beyond their stated affection for their hometown. Being offered and declining the freedom of the city complicates our understanding of returns from giving as the brothers not only did not seek a return from their giving, but refused when offered and continued giving.

The localized and informal nature of their civic duty and philanthropic focus is almost at odds with the formal and global outlook and reach of the family business itself, which was principally focused on the export of whisky to the global market they helped to create.<sup>93</sup> The Dewar brothers were undoubtedly global in their perspective owing to their exposure to international business markets and their whisky exports, which were catalyzed by the considerable travels of Tommy Dewar in his rambles around the globe and enabled the business to forge channels to those markets. This outward orientation may also have acted as a driver for the informal philanthropic activities that the brothers later engaged in, at a time when the profit from the business activities increased substantially, coinciding with a time in continental Europe and North America where informal and formal philanthropy linked to family business and family foundations was commonplace.<sup>94</sup>

It is important to note the distinctly different approach that the brothers took in comparison with their “enlightened” entrepreneurial peers, via their combination of public service, entrepreneurship, and philanthropy, which is perhaps best understood as the bringing together of all three elements in a sustainable interaction to develop place socially and economically. We argue that higher forms of entrepreneurship (e.g., navigating complex institutional environments) imply more complex arrangements—combining politics, capital, and giving. The brothers expertly navigated this but were not explicitly focusing on the connection between their business and public good in the way Lever, Cadbury, Owen, and Rowntree appear to be (with the concomitant direct benefits to their businesses). Where Lever et al. built model villages for their workers in their main businesses and saw a commensurate economic value in doing so, John Alexander instead built a model village on his estate for the estate workers with little clear economic benefit to him or his company, though arguably other noneconomic benefits were generated to their home and estate life by keeping loyal and happy workers supporting their home life. Tommy gifted Kinnoull Hill to the city despite living in England.

92. Feldman, “The Character of Innovative Places: Entrepreneurial Strategy, Economic development, and prosperity.”

93. Buxton, *The Enduring Legacy of Dewars: A Company History*, 177.

94. Rey-Garcia and Puig-Raposo, “Globalisation and the Organisation of Family Philanthropy: A Case of Isomorphism.”

Similarly, the brothers' apparent reluctance to use philanthropy to advertise their business points directly to the subtlety of their thinking at that time and a recognition that political and civic society along with business, philanthropy, and holding a strong emotional connection are instrumental to building sustainability into place. These factors, alongside no visible capital return to the brothers or the business, move the discussion beyond the parameters of capital exchange and the generative nature of capital in philanthropy to something else—it highlights the importance of local and emotional attachment to place as key drivers of philanthropy that deserve attention.

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## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Alexander Dewar for access to the family archive, and Jacqui Seargeant and Karman Randhawa of John Dewar & Sons Ltd for providing us with access to relevant corporate archive materials. Thanks also to the archivists of St Johnstone Football Club, and the Scoon and Perth No. 3 Masonic Lodge. Thanks also to the Northumbria University Business History Group, the Copenhagen Business School Centre for Business History, the Centre for Contemporary Business History and Society at the University of York, and the Association of Business Historians UK conference for the opportunity to present and receive feedback on this work in earlier forms.

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### Websites

- Imperial War Museum's War Memorials Register: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/82940>
- About Port Sunlight Village: <https://www.portsunlightvillage.com/about-port-sunlight/history-and-heritage/#:~:text=Port%20Sunlight%20is%20arguably%20the,acres%20of%20parkland%20and%20gardens.>
- The Rowntree Society, About Joseph Rowntree: <https://www.rowntreesociety.org.uk/explore-rowntree-history/rowntree-a-z/joseph-rowntree-1836-1925/>

### Archives

- British Library, London, England.  
British Newspaper Archive online.

Dewar Family Archive, Forteviot, Perthshire, Scotland.  
 John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive, Glasgow, Scotland.  
 Scoon and Perth No. 3 Masonic Lodge archive, Perth, Scotland  
 St Johnstone Football Club archive, Perth, Scotland.  
 The National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.  
 The National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

## Appendix

Table 1. Dewar Family informal giving timeline

Year	Gift	Source
1898	John Alexander pays for a New Year treat for the Perth Poorhouse: As Lord Provost, "he generously offered to provide an entertainment similar to that which the poor people were in the habit of getting and the treat came off on Wednesday. At dinner time each of the inmates was supplied with meat, potatoes and plum pudding... There was also something extra to tea and each man got an ounce of tobacco, each woman a quantity of tea and sugar, while sweets were provided for the children. In the evening a musical entertainment was given in the chapel."	<i>National Guardian</i> , 7 <sup>th</sup> January 1898.
1921	John Alexander gifts an ancient Celtic relic (the Ruthven Cross) to the city of Perth.	November 23, 1921, <i>The Courier</i> , pg. 3.
1923	John Jr. gifts Muirton estate land for extension of Perth golf course to 18 holes, alongside fishing rights for the area on the Tay.	May 15, 1923. <i>The Courier</i> , "Gift of Ground to Perth."
1923	Tommy gifts £1000 to the restoration of St John's Kirk.	<i>Evening Telegraph</i> , July 31, 1923, pg. 2.
1923	Upon learning that the Earl of Kinnoull had put Kinnoull Hill up for sale, Tommy wrote to the Town Council "I shall, therefore, take it as a privilege, if I may be allowed, to purchase it and present it to my native town, and in order that it may be kept in good condition in the future I am willing to endow it to the extent which you consider necessary." Tommy purchases it for £25,000 and immediately gifts it to the people of Perth "for all time."	<i>Evening Telegraph</i> , July 31, 1923. "Famous Perth Resort Gifted to Citizens."
1924	John Alexander funds £15,000 creation of a new maternity ward at the Perth Royal Infirmary, then a further £7000 for equipment. Officially opened in 1927.	<i>The Courier</i> , June 11, 1924. "Modest Perth Benefactors."
1924	John Alexander funds £15,000 construction of Greyfriars homeless married couple's hostel in Perth. The hostel opened in 1925.	<i>The Courier</i> October 20, 1925.
1924	John Alexander makes a second gift of £10,000 to the restoration of St John's Kirk as a war memorial bringing the total to £11,000.	<i>The Courier</i> , June 13, 1924, pg. 3.

(Continued)



Table 1 (Continued)

Year	Gift	Source
1924	Tommy gifts the city a farm and farmhouse & £5000 for a forester for the upkeep of Kinnoull Hill: "the income from which, after investment, is to meet the cost of wages for all time of a porter and a ranger for Kinnoull Hill."	<i>The Courier</i> , October 9, 1924. And <i>Evening Telegraph</i> , October 8, 1924. "Lord Dewar's Gift to Perth"
1925	John Alexander commissions a new school for Forteviot village, a free water supply, and a nominal feu-duty for inhabitants of one shilling per year.	<i>The Courier</i> , September 19, 1925.
1925	Tommy commissions "eminent landscape artist" WM Frazer (an old school friend) to paint a tourism advert for the city for £600.	<i>The Courier</i> , January 15, 1925.
1925–6	John Alexander rebuilds Forteviot as a model village, including funding a new school, and the restoration of Aberdalgie Church. The village was opened by Scottish entertainer Sir Harry Lauder.	<i>Perthshire Advertiser</i> , June 4, 1927, and <i>Scottish Field</i> , "Forteviot." July 1927. Dewar Family Archive.
1927	Tommy gives £1000 to St John's Kirk, Perth for restoration.	"Perth St John's Restoration." <i>The Courier and Advertiser</i> , July 21, 1927.
1927	John Alexander gives £21,000 (initially anonymously) to St John's Kirk, Perth for restoration. Serves as Vice President of the Restoration Committee. Tommy gives £1000. John Jr. gives £500. Almost half the cost of the restoration was defrayed by the Dewar giving.	"Perth St John's Restoration." <i>The Courier and Advertiser</i> February 21, 1927. Dewar Family Archive.
1927	Both brothers purchased 1000 preference shares each in the local football club, St Johnstone FC, which they kept until their deaths and passed on in their estates.	Correspondence with St Johnstone Football Club heritage archivist Paul Smith, September 5, 2022; Lord Dewar Will & Lord Forteviot Will and Estate, John Dewar & Sons Ltd Archive.
1927	John Alexander funds £10,000 construction of Skinnergate homeless men's hostel in Perth.	<i>Glasgow Record</i> , "Problem Perth has to face," June 10, 1927.
1927	John Alexander's new model village at Forteviot was opened on 3 <sup>rd</sup> June by Sir Harry Lauder.	<i>Perthshire Advertiser</i> , June 4, 1927.
1928	John Alexander gifts old school buildings in Forteviot to the Forteviot Hall trustees to be run as clubhouses for community benefit.	<i>The Courier</i> , February 4, 1928.
1928	Tommy hosts an auction at Smithfield Market in aid of St Bartholomew's Hospital.	<i>The Scotsman</i> , June 21, 1928. Dewar Family Archive.
1929	Brothers donate new stained-glass windows to St John's Kirk commemorating the Great War with religious imagery.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> , January 23, 1929. "Lord Dewar's Gift to Perth Church." <a href="https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/82940">https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/82940</a>
1929	John Alexander gave £100 to help establish the "Society for Teaching the Blind to Read in the County and City of Perth" on December 6, 1929.	<a href="https://visionpk.org.uk/about-us/our-history/">https://visionpk.org.uk/about-us/our-history/</a>
1929	John Alexander gives £200 & 200 books to Sandeman Public Library in Perth.	<i>The Courier and Advertiser</i> , May 9, 1929.
1929	John Alexander completes the restoration of Aberdalgie Church in Forteviot.	<i>The Evening Telegraph</i> , November 26, 1929. "The Passing of Lord Forteviot."

Note: Compiled by the authors. In the timeline of giving, we have assigned a monetary value, where available, for each gift. This does not mean that there was no monetary value to the gifts where we have not, but rather that there was no financial information stated in the news report to link to the gift.

Table 2. Posthumous Giving

Year	Gift	Source
1930	John Alexander on his death left the Perth Royal Infirmary a sum of £10,000.	<i>Dundee Evening Telegraph</i> , February 10, 1930.
1930	John Alexander left a gift of £60,000 capital endowed and shares in the new Distiller's Company Ltd. to the Forteviot Trust as a formal philanthropic vehicle for his estate.	November 25, 1929, <i>Glasgow Herald</i> . Taken from John Dewar & Sons Ltd. Archive.
1930	Tommy leaves money to the staff who served him in his suite at the Savoy Hotel in London. Donates a further £9000 to three London hospitals, £10,000 to employees of John Dewar & Sons who have served more than 10 years, and a further £13,000 to other employees.	May 30, 1930. Lord Dewar's Will. John Dewar & Sons Ltd. Archive.
1930	Both brothers left artworks and other ephemera to galleries and museums in and around Perth and the surrounding environs.	May 30, 1930. Lord Dewar's Will. John Dewar & Sons Ltd. Archive.

Note: John Alexander died in November 1929, and Tommy died in April 1930. At death their estates were enormous—John Alexander died leaving an estate valued at £4.5 million and Tommy with an estate valued at £5 million.<sup>95</sup> Death did not stop the brothers from giving, however. In their wills, they designated that several good causes should receive further disbursements, outlined in the table below. In death, just as in life, their giving was place-based and focused on the pursuits and values they believed in—proximity-based giving, healthcare, and art, as well as their former staff.

95. June 3, 1930. *The Courier and Advertiser*. "Lord Dewar's Bequests."

**Cite this article:** MacKenzie, Niall G., Jillian Gordon, and Martin J. Gannon. "Local Patriots: Dewar's Scotch Whisky, Prosociality, Politics, and Place—1846–1930." *Enterprise & Society* (2024): 1–24.