

John Rankin and John Garstang: Funding Egyptology in a Pioneering Age

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Abstract

John Rankin (1845-1928) was a Liverpool-based ship merchant who made his fortune working for his family company, *Rankin, Gilmour & Co.* He is also known to have been a prolific philanthropist who donated vast sums of money to a range of worthy causes, including the excavations of John Garstang in Egypt on behalf of the Liverpool Institute of Archaeology. As a result of his membership of Garstang's excavation Financing Committee, Rankin received a notable collection of objects from Garstang's Egyptian excavations as repayment for his donations.

Rankin donated his collection of Egyptian objects, including those from Garstang's excavations, to several institutions including the Liverpool Institute of Archaeology (now the Garstang Museum of Archaeology) and World Museum Liverpool. Rankin and his family are known to have moved to the Lake District in 1903 where they became enthusiastically involved in many aspects of local life. This link is perhaps illustrated most clearly by the donation of at least 40 Egyptian objects to Kendal Museum in 1923, and of several Egyptian objects for the study collection of Sedbergh School, where Rankin was a governor.

In this paper I aim to present the background to Rankin's life in the context of a pioneering age of archaeology in the early 20th Century, in particular his association with John Garstang, and to highlight Rankin's legacy to the field of Egyptology.

John Rankin and John Garstang: Funding Egyptology in a Pioneering Age

Introduction

The lives of several high-profile 19th and 20th century donors and supporters of excavations in Egypt are relatively well-documented including most notably Amelia Edwards¹; however this is not always the case and the story of one particularly philanthropic individual associated with the excavations of John Garstang in Egypt, Mr. John Rankin², is gradually being revealed as one result of an MLA-funded 'Effective Collections' project³ which investigated collections known to contain Garstang objects in North-West museums, one of which was Kendal Museum. Rankin (see Plate 1) is known to have donated a substantial collection of around 40 Egyptian objects to Kendal Museum in 1923, several of which are of significant historical importance and can be traced back to Garstang's excavations (see below), and donated part of his Egyptian collection to a number of other north-west institutions.

¹ Moon (2006)

² See also Mills (2007)

³ http://www.kendalmuseum.org.uk/news-11-03-08_garstang_project.php

John Garstang

John Garstang was born in Blackburn, Lancashire on 5th May 1876, the youngest son of Dr. Walter Garstang and Matilda Mary Wardley (see Plate 2). He was educated at Blackburn Grammar School and at Jesus College, Oxford, where he read mathematics. Before graduating in 1899 he became interested in archaeology, at which point he began to excavate Roman sites in Britain, including Ribchester in Lancashire. In the winter of 1899, Garstang joined Sir Flinders Petrie at Abydos in Egypt and from 1901 to 1914, Garstang excavated every year in Egypt or Sudan at sites including Abydos⁴, Beni Hassan⁵, Esna⁶ and Hierakonpolis⁷. Garstang was a pioneer of scientific archaeology and kept meticulous records of his excavations in the form of detailed site notebooks, together with an extensive collection of photographs as a visual record of his excavations⁸; a comparatively groundbreaking practice in early 20th century archaeology in Egypt.

Like Petrie, Garstang assembled excavation committees of wealthy donors who provided funds for his fieldwork in Egypt and Sudan – Rankin was the treasurer of Garstang's excavation committee for several years - and in return for their donations those individuals would receive a selection of Egyptian objects from the excavations. Several names appear more than once in lists of Garstang's excavation committees including John Rankin, Lady O'Hagan, who donated her Egyptian collection to Towneley Hall Museum in Burnley, F. G. Hilton Price, one-time President of the Egypt Exploration Society, and H. Martyn Kennard who was also a major sponsor of Finders Petrie's excavations in Egypt (See Plate 4).

At the age of 26, Garstang was appointed honorary Reader in Egyptian Archaeology at the University of Liverpool and five years later in 1907 he became John Rankin Professor of the Methods and Practice of Archaeology, a post he held until his retirement in 1941. Precise details of Garstang's relationship with John Rankin, one of his most prolific financial supporters, remains somewhat vague due to the dearth of surviving documentation; however it has been possible to ascertain details of Rankin's life and background which begin to reveal more about the "man behind the money".

John Rankin

Rankin's family were long settled in the parish of Mearns in Renfrewshire, Scotland. The family shared the ownership of a successful worldwide merchant navy company based in Liverpool and in Miramichi in New Brunswick, Canada, named Pollock, Gilmour & Co, later to be named Rankin, Gilmour & Co. Rankin was born in 1845 in Miramichi to James Rankin and Marion Ferguson and in 1854, at the age of nine, was sent from Miramichi with his uncle, Robert Rankin Snr, to be educated in Liverpool. The party sailed to Scotland on the timber ship *Actaeon*, which belonged to the family fleet and despite a serious collision en route, the vessel managed to stay afloat. From Scotland Rankin travelled on to Liverpool, where he began his education at the prestigious Dr. Ihnes School (now the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts).

⁴ Snape (1985)

⁵ Garstang (1907)

⁶ Downes (1974)

⁷ Adams (1987) & (1995)

⁸ Garstang's field records are kept in the archives of the Garstang Museum of Archaeology at the University of Liverpool.

Rankin subsequently enrolled at Madras College, a prep school for St. Andrew's University, however he did not complete his University course because he joined his family shipping business at the age of 16 on September 1st, 1861, beginning his time with the company as a clerk in the Accounts Department. On 1st January 1861, at the age of 26, Rankin became a partner in the family business at what was an exciting time to enter the company; during the mid-19th Century they owned the largest merchant fleet in the UK. Rankin later became chairman of Rankin, Gilmour & Co. on 1st January 1906.

Rankin was a prominent figure in Liverpool society during the early 20th Century and was involved in insurance and finance in addition to his shipping enterprises; in 1900 he was appointed a director of the Bank of Liverpool, and from 1906 to 1909 he was the chairman of the board. For twenty years he was also a director, and later chairman, of the Royal Insurance Company. Rankin was also a director of the British and Foreign Marine Insurance Company and the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, a member of the committee of the Liverpool and London Steamship Owners' Protection Association, a member and chairman of the Liverpool Committee of Lloyd's Register of Shipping, and of the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society. He published a history of his family business in 1908 entitled *A History of our Firm: Some Account of Pollock, Gilmour and Co. and its Connections*.

Rankin married Helen Margaret Jack (1849-1937) on September 1st, 1875. Helen took an interest in nursing and became the first president of the Nursing Association. The couple had two sons: Robert and James, and a daughter, Agnes, who later married Mr. William Rathbone of Liverpool. Rankin was also a member of the Conservative party, and his son, James, represented the East Toxteth Division of Liverpool in Parliament. The family spent their time between residences at St. Michael's Mount, St. Michael's Hamlet, Liverpool (now a nursing home) and Hill Top, New Hutton (previously Holme Park Prep School near Kendal, now private flats). The Rankins spent much of their time at Hill Top and involved themselves in all aspects of local life; for example Rankin held the position of High Sheriff of Westmorland. The guest book from Hill Top is kept in the County Archives at Kendal Town Hall and contains several interesting Egyptological signatures including Percy and Essie Newberry (see Plate 7) and Francis and Nora Llewellyn Griffith (see Plate 8).

Rankin's obituary in Liverpool's *Post and Mercury* newspaper (24th December 1928, see Plate 9) described him as "the most successful beggar the University [of Liverpool] has ever had". He is known to have donated over £1 million to charitable causes over his lifetime as well as many other private benefactions of which the total is unknown. Rankin was constantly looking for a worthy cause to which he could donate; he was a major supporter of the University of Liverpool and personally raised over £150,000 which allowed the College to become a University. He also funded the construction of student accommodation (The University's Rankin Hall) and established four chairs at the University of Liverpool in Russian, History, English, and Egyptian Archaeology which was occupied by John Garstang. Notably Rankin donated £20,000 to the construction of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, and the 'Rankin Porch' was built at the southern entrance to the Cathedral in honour of the family, including the Rankin coat of arms and 13 statues including King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (see Plate 6).

Rankin was a governor and financial supporter of Sedbergh School⁹, a prestigious public school in the Yorkshire Dales also attended by F. Ll. Griffith. He is known to have donated some of his Egyptian collection to Sedbergh School during the 1920s though unfortunately details are scant as the collection was apparently broken up and divided between other, as yet unknown, institutions during the 1950s.

Rankin died aged 83 on 24th December 1928 and had been ill for several years before his death. He was buried at Toxteth Park cemetery in Liverpool and the funeral took place at Sefton Park Presbyterian Church in Liverpool with which the Rankin family had been associated with for many years. His funeral was well attended by many important members of Liverpool society, including the Lord Mayor of Liverpool. The Freedom of the City of Liverpool was conferred upon Rankin in January 1922 when he was described as “one of the greatest citizens Liverpool ever had”.

Our fundamental concern with Rankin is to ascertain the details of his relationship with Garstang, whilst also trying to understand his interest in Egyptian archaeology; was his financial support purely for material gain or indeed was Rankin genuinely interested in Egypt? One newspaper obituary tells that Rankin took an anonymous group of “University [of Liverpool] enthusiasts on a trip up the Nile”, though regretfully offers no further insight; however could it reasonably be assumed that this was a trip made partially for pleasure, but also perhaps to allow Rankin to introduce his peers (potential future donors?) to Garstang’s excavations, if indeed they visited Garstang on this trip?

As a result of his donations to Garstang’s excavations Rankin amassed an important collection of high-quality Egyptian antiquities, of which he donated around 40 objects to Kendal Museum in 1923 (see Plate 4 for part of the object list).

Two of the most significant objects are as follows:

KM 1993.249¹⁰ (Plate 10): Painted wooden Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figure excavated by Garstang from a Third Intermediate Period rock-cut tomb at Speos Artemidos, near Beni Hassan. The arrangement of the two tapered ‘poles’ and the lotus element is apparently unique¹¹.

KM 1993.235¹² (Plate 11): Inscribed figurine excavated by Garstang from Tomb 537 at Abydos which represents Sobekhotep, son of Nehesy, an official who lived at Abydos during the Second Intermediate Period. The inscription on the back pillar reads: “An offering which the king gives (on behalf of) Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, that he may give offerings to the Ka of ... Sobekhotep the justified, begotten of Nehesy, by his sister who causes his name to live ... Kemet”. Sobekhotep may have been a soldier and so his sister may have dedicated the statue of her brother after he died in active service and was buried at Abydos.

Rankin also donated copies of Garstang’s excavation reports *El Arabah* and *Reqaqnah and Bet Khallaf* to Kendal Museum, both of which contain personal dedications from Garstang himself. In addition to a donation of objects to Sedbergh School mentioned previously, Rankin also donated Egyptian objects to what is now World Museum, Liverpool including a wooden model boat and

⁹ <http://www.sedberghschool.org/about-the-school.html>

¹⁰ Garstang 1907: pp. 202-204.

¹¹ Dr. D. Aston pers. comm.

¹² Snape (1994); Marée (2010)

three model figures donated on March 22nd 1915¹³, and what is now the Garstang Museum, University of Liverpool including the head of a Tuthmoside statue. A letter from John Garstang addressed to Principal (later Vice-Chancellor) Sir Alfred Dale of the University of Liverpool dated May 26th 1903 contains the following intriguing information:

“[...] 1. I wish to express to you in writing my proposal to place at the disposal of the students my [Garstang’s] library and type-collection of antiquities. // Then (?) Mr. John Rankin’s authority to state that he is prepared to offer for this same purpose a valuable series of Egyptian antiquities collected for him by myself” (see Plate 3).

It would be interesting to investigate this further in order to establish for example whether Rankin himself also actively acquired part of his Egyptian collection during his trip(s) to Egypt; an idea which will potentially become more apparent if more of his collection can be identified in other institutions.

Concluding Thoughts

Although the details of Rankin’s relationship with Garstang remain to be fully established, Rankin’s financial, and personal, involvement in Garstang’s excavations evidently led him to acquire an important collection of Egyptian objects which was subsequently a considerable asset to several different north-west institutions. Rankin therefore left an indelible mark on the history of Egyptology in the north-west and only now is the significance of his legacy being made apparent. Whether parts of Rankin’s Egyptian collection were donated further afield remains to be ascertained, or indeed whether other, as yet unknown, north-west institutions hold Rankin objects or archival material.

¹³ Dr. A. Cooke pers. comm.

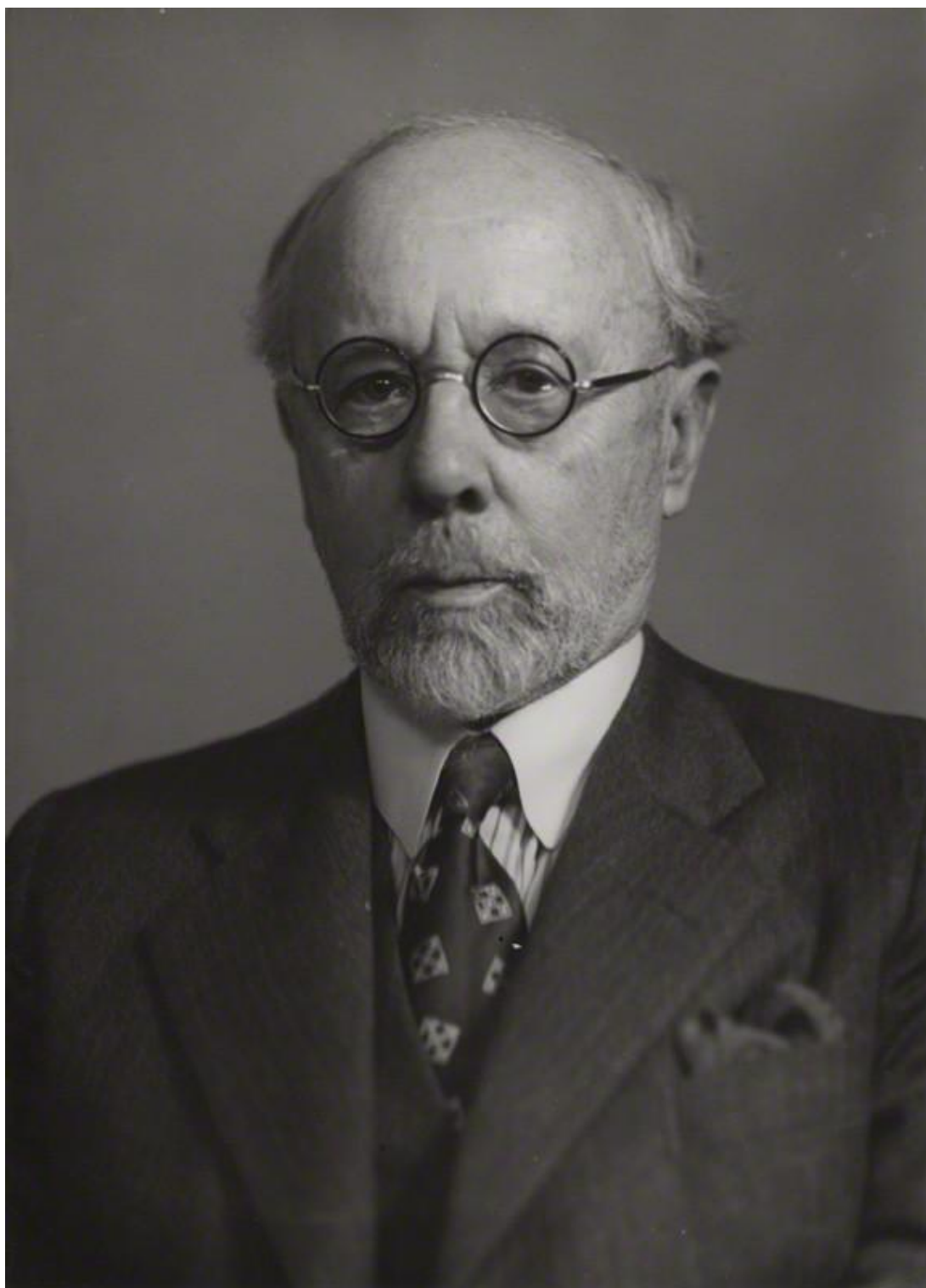
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Images (all taken by the author unless otherwise stated)

1. Portrait of John Rankin (©Special Collections and Archives, The University of Liverpool)
2. Portrait of John Garstang (© The National Portrait Gallery)
3. Letter from John Garstang to Principal (later Vice-Chancellor) Sir Alfred Dale of the University of Liverpool dated May 26th 1903, mentioning Rankin's donation of Egyptian objects to the University (© Special Collections and Archives, The University of Liverpool)
4. The back of one of Garstang's object labels, listing the members of the Excavation Committee including John Rankin
5. Page from the 1923 entry in Kendal Museum's minute books listing the Egyptian objects donated by Rankin to that institution; many of which were excavated by John Garstang
6. The Rankin coat of arms from the 'Rankin Porch' of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral
7. Rankin's Guest Book from Hill Top showing the signatures of Percy and Essie Newberry
8. Rankin's Guest Book from Hill Top showing the signatures of Francis and Nora Llewellyn Griffith
9. Copy of Rankin's obituary from Liverpool's *Post and Mercury* newspaper, dated December 24th 1928
10. Painted wooden Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figure. Third Intermediate Period. Excavated by Garstang from Speos Artemidos, near Beni Hasan. Presented by John Rankin. Height: 552mm. Kendal Museum 1993.249
11. Limestone statuette of Sobekhotep, son of Nehesy. Limestone. Second Intermediate Period. Excavated by Garstang from Abydos, Tomb 537A'08. Presented by John Rankin. Height: 175mm. Kendal Museum 1993.245





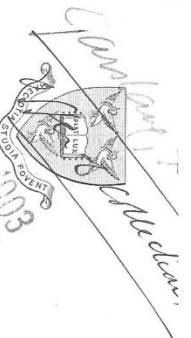
series of Egyptian Antiquities offered
to him by myself. (3) I have also
received a private offer to provide a
small working library of comparative
antiquities for use by my pupils, & I understand
that Louche has offered £50 for similar purposes.

II Speaking for Mr. Rawlin & myself the
only conditions which we would submit
to him is offering them gifts of Antiquities
& the College are

a. And suitable accommodation as is
provided for them.

b. But in case at any time Antiquities
or Egyptology seem to be represented on the
staff, ~~of the~~ ^{of the} than the collection would
need to us the donors, during our lives;
or be handed over to the public Museum
of the city after our deaths.

Will you kindly make this communication
to the proper authorities. I have forwarded
a copy in substance to the Dean of the Faculty
of Arts. Yours very truly
John Gasterbury.



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE,
LIVERPOOL.

May 26. 1893

Dear Principal Dore,

Thanks for your letter. I hope to

call on the morning at 10.15 (as usual), & am
very glad to have an opportunity of seeing you
as I am in want of a room for immediate
use.

Myself: I hope it may be arranged
having settlement of the question of accommodation
for the Museum in Egyptian Antiquities, that I

may have the room of the small anti room
attached to the Lecture Room, which is well lit
& suitable in every way. I should like to get
it on Thursday if possible.

1. I want to express to you in writing my
proposals to have at the disposal of the
Schools any library & type collection of
antiquities. I have Mr. John Rawlin's
authority to state that he is prepared to
offer to the same purpose a valuable

P5B/2/2

EXCAVATIONS AT BENI-HASAN,
1902-3.

Patrons.

MR. MARTYN KENNARD.

REV. W. MACGREGOR.

The LADY O'HAGAN
(on behalf of the Towneley Museum and
Art Gallery).

MR. JOHN RANKIN
(on behalf of the Liverpool University
Museum).

DR. ARTHUR J. EVANS, F.R.S.
(the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

DR. M. R. JAMES
(the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

MR. F. HILTON PRICE, Dir. S.A.,
Hon. Treas.

1923 Presented by Mr John Rankin
 Jan'y Hill Top - Kendal.
 per Mr R. H. Greenwood
 valuable & important Collection
 of Egyptian relics dating variously
 B.C. 4000 - 1500
 - wooden head rest '83
 Veneered wooden box '83
 2 Alabaster Vases B.C. 2600
 Small Alabaster Vase
 2 small Idol figures
 2 Strings of Beads
 Scarab rings & beads in small box
 Bronze dog broken 83
 Circular Alabaster dish 13 in diam 83
 Tablet of Men in Case
 Beads in red matchbox
 5 Earthenware Vases on Metal Stands
 2 do do on Separate Stands
 Wooden Hieroglyphic frieze 18 in long
 4 Earthenware Vases on Metal Stands
 1 Alabaster Egg Cup & metal Stand
 3 extra metal Stands



	1911	Names	
Oct	Oct: 20 to 23.	Ernie B. Newberry	19
"	"	Harry E. Newberry	
Oct	Oct 27 th - 30 th	Harry C. Jack	
"	"	Edythe Rome	
Nov	Oct 27 th to 30 th	J. Rome	
"	"	J. H. Sinclair	
"	"	Auntie F. M. Bluffus	
"	Nov. 17 th - 18 th	Douglas E. Hobbs	
"	"	Samuel M. Barnard	
"	Dec 7 th - 9 th	Arthur E. Patterson	
"	Christmas 1911		
"		Ernie C. Pearson	

7

	July 10 th	Names	
July 11 th	July 11 th	Alfred Haydock	Mr. Haydock
July 24 th	July 24 th	Edith M. Irvine	Little Hays
" 24 - 25	" 24 - 25	Mrs. Griffith	7111111111
July 16 - 28	July 16 - 28	T. E. Eccles	38 Knowles
July 26 - 28	July 26 - 28	Harry Rice	" 20th
July 22 nd - Aug 5	July 22 nd - Aug 5	James A. Richardson	T. E. E
August 12 th - 5 th	August 12 th - 5 th	Dr. Della Irvine	31 from
" "	" "	Winifred Chaworth-Musters	J. S. H.
" "	" "	John C. Chaworth-Musters	The Cott
" "	" "	Henry J. Pollitt	Harry
August 8 th	August 8 th	Harry E. Wood	Singl
" 12 th	" 12 th	Emily Harrison	Lon do
" 12 th	" 12 th	Alice Harrison	"
" 14 th	" 14 th	John Montgomery	14 R
" 15 th	" 15 th	J. S. Rankin	10 No
" 22 nd	" 22 nd	Maggie Rankin	Wor
" 19	" 19	Marjorie Rankin	Box

8

POST AND MERCURY,
DECEMBER 24, 1928.

DEATH OF MR. JOHN RANKIN:

A FINE EXAMPLE OF
CITIZENSHIP.

GENEROUS HELPER OF MANY
GOOD CAUSES.

We regret to announce the death, at his residence, St. Michael's Mount, Liverpool, yesterday, of Mr. John Rankin, for many years a leading figure in the commercial and philanthropic life of the city.

Mr. Rankin had been in failing health for some time, and became seriously ill about three weeks ago.

Mr. Rankin, who was in his eighty-third year, was head of the firm of Rankin, Gilmour, and Co., Ltd., and a director of several other companies. He was a free-man of the city, and had the honorary LL.D. degree of Liverpool University conferred upon him some years ago.

Mr. Rankin married Helen Margaret Jack, daughter of the late James Jack, who, with two sons, Mr. Robert Rankin and Mr. James Rankin, and one daughter, Mrs. William Rathbone, survives him. Mr. and Mrs. Rankin celebrated their golden wedding in 1925.

At last night's service at Sefton Park Presbyterian Church the Rev. Dr. J. S. McDonald made reference to the death of Mr. John Rankin.

It is expected that at the funeral service in the church, at noon on Thursday, the lessons will be read by the Lord Mayor (Alderman H. M. Miller) and Professor Wilberforce, in the unavoidable absence of the Vice-Chancellor of the University.

The interment at Smithdown-road Cemetery will follow this service.

A memoir of Mr. Rankin appears on Page Nine.

AN APPRECIATION.

MR. RANKIN'S GREAT WORK
FOR THE UNIVERSITY.

Mr. Hugh R. Rathbone, Pro-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool and formerly president of the Council, sends us the following appreciation:—

It is many years since I first became intimately associated with Mr. John Rankin. In the later days of University College he came into very close association with a group of enthusiasts for higher education, amongst whom may be recalled Dr. Caton, Sir John Brunner, Dr. Muspratt, Professor Boyce, Professor Mackay, and, especially, Dr. John Watson, who held a position of very great influence in Liverpool. Mr. Rankin took a company of University enthusiasts a trip up the Nile, amongst others being Dr. John Watson and Professor Mackay. From that date the promotion of the development of the College into the University took a leap forward.

Mr. Rankin was soon infected by the enthusiasm of the company. He had just joined the University College Council, and henceforth was one of the most untiring promoters of the scheme. He most willingly undertook to be treasurer of the fund, and under his active management a large sum of money of upwards £150,000 was soon promised and collected. This removed any doubt on the financial side as to the granting of a charter for the University by the Privy Council. Mr.

Rankin not only gave most generously on this occasion, but was the most successful beggar the University has ever had. He took great interest on the council of its management in the early years. He was a most regular attendant, and though unwilling to offer advice, when pressed to do so, on some difficult problem, the advice he gave was always backed by sound reasons.

Lavish Anonymous Gifts.

His generosity to the University did not end with the large sum collected at the foundation of the University. Four chairs bear his name, either singly or associated with others, but what he gave anonymously greatly exceeded his known benefactions; in fact, his public gifts were largely due to his belief in example, for he disliked publicity. And, indeed, his example was contagious, and there is little doubt that many followed where John Rankin led.

One of the grounds for his enthusiasm for the University was his perception of the gain which would accrue from the intimate contact of the academic staff and of the citizens generally. He was an early advocate and promoter of the University Club.



