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Editorial

Dr Valentina Bold FSA Scot, University of Edinburgh

Welcome to the 2025 issue of *Review of Scottish Culture*. This is the second time *Review of Scottish Culture* has appeared in a solely digital form, free to download whilst still maintaining the highest standards of peer-reviewed scholarship. We were delighted by the response to issue 29 and thank readers for their kind comments and responses, in particular to our willingness to include audio and video materials in submissions – something we will continue to welcome in this new format.

Like previous volumes – digital and print – the 2025 issue contains a wide range of ethnological material. It reflects Scottish experiences in different historical periods, drawing on both first and second hand accounts – some collected in print, others recorded in audio and video. Tangible and intangible culture are both represented. Essays include discussions of landscape archaeology and material cultures, to folk narratives, working lives and dance, through narrative, visual and performative acts. They range through Scotland in all its rural, coastal and urban dimensions, as it is perceived by cultural insiders, external analysts and those who combine both these points of view.

As has always been done in *Review of Scottish Culture,* contributors document and discuss traditions – well known and otherwise – that have been sustained and developed through subsequent generations. Several pieces focus on the re-interpretation, re-imagination and re-purposing of traditions by and for contemporary audiences; traditions living through narrative, visual and performative acts.

Reflecting this plurality in Scottish ethnology, the ethnologists included here approach their topics from distinctive perspectives. Writing from across Scotland, and from Europe, they represent academic centres of excellence, as well as independent scholarship and grassroots' perspectives, as this field continually aspires to do. In future issues, I would like to encourage this plurality, and diversity: the *Review of Scottish Culture* should be, like the subject itself, open to all.

Whilst the digital format lends itself to reading articles in whatever order you prefer, in the full text version there is some attempt to organise with a sense of flow. To that end, the issue opens with a pair of essays which consider culture as it is represented in print – in magazines and in book form – both with strong connections to other ethnological genres.

Stephen Miller, in 'William George Black, "Neomagus" and Folk Medicine (1876)" sheds

new light on this young Glasgow lawyer and 'South Scotland' Secretary of the Folk-lore Society. Miller suggests Black's work in classification, and European influence, deserves recognition, alongside that of his better-known contemporaries, like Thoms.

Petra Johana Poncarová, writing on early twentieth century 'Folklore Material in Ruaraidh Erskine's Gaelic Magazines', demonstrates that – contrary to pre-conceptions of elitist and 'modern' content – these equally reflect contemporary interest in Gaelic traditions, poetry and song, including the Fenian cycle. Contact with Celtic traditions across Europe is also reflected, alongside knowledge of Gaelic scholarship and folk narratives.

Moving from narrative to working lives – again with Gaelic traditions at their heart – Gavin Parsons' 'Buaile bheag do na laoigh (a wee fold for the calves)'. Parson demonstrates that historical practices of cattle management, to encourage milk production, deserves far more attention than it is usually given from ethnological perspectives. He goes beyond the documentation of milking songs, and charms, to consider cows as the 'centre of the domestic economy' – an aspect that can be read into material culture as well as interpreted using archaeological evidence.

Linked to this built heritage record, Arun Sood's 'Slavery, Commerce, and Art: Kelvingrove House and The City Industrial Museum' follows. This engages directly with the foundation processes and individuals involved, the history of buildings and development, of what would become an iconic Glasgow collection. As Sood says, its story raises 'further questions about how Glasgow's civic institutions might approach the recovery and representation of their own historical links – direct or indirect – with slavery and colonial commerce' – one that we hope to pursue in future issues.

Built heritage and colonialism are also at the core of Murray Cook and Jennifer Strachan's essay, 'Mr Haldane's Hermitage: Re-discovering a Late 18th Century Immersive Poetry Tableau at Airthrey Estate, Bridge of Allan, Stirling, a Case of Disguising East India Company Profits'. This treats the construction of a previously unrecorded 18th century grotto in Stirling – linked to Oliver Goldsmith's 'The Hermit' and trends in garden design.

Pat Ballantyne's 'The White Heather Club Reassessed' moves the issue into a slightly different direction – albeit one that, like the Hermitage, is anchored in a creative imagination. Memories of the television programme might still be contentious, amongst scholars of Scottish identity. However Ballantyne, drawing on her own recordings with performers on the show, argues that it is ripe for reassessment, as 'an important and influential part of Scotland's rich cultural heritage'.

The following piece, by Duncan Sneddon, also engages with visual representations of iconic Scottish figures: 'Suppos þat þai be nocht bot fabill: Medieval Film and Robert the Bruce'. Making reference to a range of cinematic examples, including *Robert the Bruce* and *Outlaw King,* Sneddon presents alternative readings to the 'restrictive' approach of measurements by

'historical accuracy' to allow their evaluation as creative works – an imaginative category in its own ethnological right.

Joel Conn continues the theme of popular culture in, 'The Joke of Wellington: The Duke of Wellington's cone from folk act to brand', examining a familiar piece of folk art and its role in 'popular culture, commerce and folklore'. Its adaptability to occasional use on special occasions, and for advertising purposes, are shown by Conn to be subject to 'creative development' in an intriguing, and ongoing, process.

The penultimate essays in this issue are auto-ethnography, documenting personal experiences of responding to the past – through engaging with historical figures, and through the recreation of traditional customs.

Jennifer Morag Henderson's 'Daughters of the North: writing the biography of Jean Gordon and Mary, Queen of Scots' explores her narrative choices from her own perspective – highlighting the importance of a 'good story'. Andrew McEwan's, 'Reviving Walking the Marches, Stirling 900. The Captain's Story', is a fascinating first-hand account of bringing a lapsed tradition back to life, and giving it new vigour in a civic context. His piece is introduced, in video, by Murray Cook, Stirling's city archaeologist. The issue ends with a consideration of another custom: seasonal handball. Neill Martin considers current practices, and the history, of a tradition which once ranged across Scotland, and continues in the Borders and in Orkney.

In short, there is variety in the topics and the approaches within this issue. It offers, I believe, a representative range of models for ethnological research, present and future. This is an exciting, dynamic and growing field of research, allowing multiple approaches to the rich and varied culture of Scotland, whether the physical nation or its creative counterparts. I hope that you will enjoy reading, and downloading, this issue of *Review of Scottish Culture*. We also encourage new submissions for 2026.

Valentina Bold, Stirling

The European Ethnological Research Centre

Outputs and projects

The European Ethnological Research Centre (EERC) was founded by Prof Alexander Fenton CBE in 1989. Initially housed within National Museums Scotland the EERC has, since 2006, been part of Celtic & Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. The EERC conducts research into Scottish life and society following an ethnological approach. The results of that research are published in a variety of outputs: Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology; Flashbacks; Regional Flashbacks; Sources in Scottish History, Review of Scottish Culture and other occasional publications.

The Flashbacks Series

The Flashbacks series provides first-hand accounts of lived experience from those who live and have lived across Scotland. These accounts are from a variety of presentation: diary; memoir; correspondence and recorded interviews. The *Regional Flashbacks* draws form the Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project in providing these first-hand accounts. From work to family life, town to village and the external to the inner world of the contributors, readers gain an insight into life and society across Scotland.

Sources in Local History

The Sources in Local History series was created by Professor Fenton. His aim was to publish and promote research into diaries, account books, journals and other documents containing information about everyday life and society in Scotland. Professor Fenton had long advocated their value for the study of the country's ethnology and history, and before the series was established, he had included part-transcriptions and associated articles in the *Review of Scottish Culture*. Six volumes were published in the original *Sources in Local History* series.

The series was revived in 2015 as part of the Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project. With this relaunch, it became a free-to-access, digital resource. It also broadened its scope to include documents produced by societies as well as by individuals; and a new 'Scots Abroad' strand was introduced in order to capture the experiences of the many Scots who left these shores either as emigrants or sojourners, or in the course of duty. To date, 31 volumes of transcribed and edited documents have been produced in the new series.

Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project (RESP)

Following completion of the 14-volume 'Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology', the EERC launched the Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project (RESP), in 2011. The aim of the Project was to enhance the Compendium by facilitating the collection of primary source material that would illustrate everyday life and society in Scotland, past and present. After an initial scoping study, Dumfries and Galloway was chosen as the first research

area and it was determined that the Study would have two distinct parts: the spoken word and the written word. From the outset, key objectives included i) the involvement of local partners and volunteers and ii) implementing a process which would allow the research materials generated by the Project to be shared as widely as possible.

RESP: The spoken word

EERC staff worked with local organisations and partners and held events to promote the RESP and recruit volunteer fieldworkers and potential interviewees. Fieldworkers were subsequently given training in all aspects of collection, from practical equipment operation to ethical guidance. They were given ongoing support from EERC staff which began with detailed feedback on initial interviews and included the provision of a shared reflective diary (where fieldworkers were encouraged to reflect on their own practice and share their thoughts on what they had learned from each interview). Fieldworker gatherings were also arranged, where participating fieldworkers were encouraged to reflect on the material they had collected. During the active years of the Dumfries and Galloway RESP (2011-2018), around 60 volunteer fieldworkers made recordings with nearly 250 interviewees, amounting to hundreds of hours of new fieldwork research.

The decision to recruit local volunteer fieldworkers was central to the Project and had a number of beneficial outcomes. Most importantly, the Project sought to gather a body of source material which would represent the priorities and concerns of the region. By training the fieldworkers and then allowing them decide who to interview and what questions to ask, it was hoped an unmediated impression of local experience could emerge. In addition, by including local partners and volunteer fieldworkers, the EERC were able to maximise the work that could be achieved during the study period. This led to a dynamic and invigorating experience for everyone involved.

In the introduction to Volume One of the Compendium of Scottish Ethnology, Dr Margaret Mackay includes this quote from Sandy Fenton, a guiding principle of the RESP:

> [Ethnology] is a subject that relates to each and every one of us and there is no one who cannot be a practitioner. It is one in which personal roots, the home and environment within which the researcher is brought up, become part of the research apparatus of national identity (I:26).

In addition to the active collecting, a small number of items and pre-existing collections were donated to the Project, thereby ensuring wider access to these materials and ongoing care and security of this valuable legacy resource. This included the first materials added to the RESP Archive, a series of interviews carried out between 1999 and 2016 comprising 42 recordings made with 46 contributors made by members of the Stranraer and District Local History Trust. This rich body of material resulted in the first publication to be generated by the RESP, the Regional Flashback *Stranraer and District Lives: Voices in Trust* (2017). Another donated item, a recording made by Ian Blacklock in 1975 with his 100-year-old granny, takes us back to memories of seeing Queen

Victoria at the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894.

The RESP model has developed over time and is currently active in East Lothian with smaller projects in other parts of the country, such as work with the Harris Tweed Authority in the Western Isles, supported on a smaller scale and over a shorter time-frame.

To date, almost 300 fieldwork recordings have been added to the East Lothian collection. This includes both ongoing original fieldwork and donated material.

The RESP Archive Project

As mentioned above, a key principle of the RESP from the outset was to make the resources as widely accessible as possible and this commitment led to the establishment of the RESP Archive Project and the collaboration with the Centre for Research Collections at the University of Edinburgh, where the RESP fieldwork recordings are now held. As a born-digital collection, the RESP recordings were already cleared for digital release and so, in 2018, work began on building the resource which would become the RESP website https://collections.ed.ac.uk/eerc/

This website is accessible to anyone and provides access to the entire RESP collection. Each recording has been screened in order to comply with GDPR regulations, and redacted as appropriate. The recordings each appear on a dedicated page alongside any available visual resources, a detailed summary of the interview contents and full transcriptions. In this way, the RESP team have sought to make the recordings as accessible as possible. The resource continues to be added to with both original fieldwork recordings and legacy materials and, now that the website is up and running, the RESP archive team is moving focus more towards outreach and engagement in order to promote the resource and encourage wide engagement with this unique collection.

Innovation: Being part of the wider Centre for Research Collections has meant that the EERC and the RESP Archive Team have been able to call on the expertise of a varied team of experts. The Project has also provided a unique testing bed for the team working within the CRC on digital preservation: allowing them to realise significant developments in this important area of archive work.

A key strength of the RESP model is that it is simple and agile. It has therefore been possible to respond to opportunities as they arise and to direct resources wisely to achieve the best impact. One recent development has been to move into film production as a way of using in-house expertise to develop resources which can reach a wide audience, encourage more participation in the RESP and create a resource that can be used in future and beyond the time the RESP is active.

RESP outputs so far include:

Printed resources: Four books, including one edited by the volunteer fieldworker who conducted the research (*Whithorn: An Economy of People, 1920-1960* ed. Julia Muir Watt) and one joint-edited with a volunteer (*Lochmaben:*

Community Memories, eds. Isabelle C Gow and Sheila Findlay).

The provision of written articles about the work and content of the RESP is an area under development at the moment and includes:

> iPRES paper: 'A Tartan Rather than a Plain Cloth': Building a Shared Workflow to Preserve the Regional Ethnology of Scotland Archive, delivered by Sara Day Thomson, Digital Archivist, CRC, at iPRES22, in Glasgow, September 2022.
>
> SRA paper: 'The Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project: Archive and Research in Partnership' based on a paper given by Caroline Milligan and Lesley Bryson at the Scottish Records Association conference in 2022, this paper has been submitted and is awaiting publication.
>
> David Hannay paper: David Hannay donated his fieldwork collection to the RESP (75 recordings made over his lifetime) and this material, largely concerned with the communities of Carsluith and Creetown, is explored in a paper currently being prepared for publication.

Visual Resources: *The Past is Still with Us*: A 19-minute film about East Lothian fisherman, Charlie Horne, which was shown in local venues and is now available on the RESP Archive website. *Musselburgh Mills*: A 42-minute film which brought together the recollections of the main mills in Musselburgh: the paper mill, the wire mill and the net mill. This film, a collaboration with the John Gray Centre in Haddington, was launched in Musselburgh to an audience of over 170 people, many of whom had their own memories of the mills to share and discuss. The film was shown several times in 2023 with more screenings planned in 2024, and will also be available on-line in the future.

EERC and Project staff

Lesley Bryson has been Project Archivist at the Centre for Research Collections, University of Edinburgh since 2007 and the RESP Project Archivist since 2018. Lesley is responsible for resource development, workflow planning and also coordinates and undertakes cataloguing of the RESP Collections.

Colin Gateley has worked in audio visual production and digitisation for museums, galleries and education for over 27 years. He has been an AV assistant to EERC since 2017, including the editing and production of film output and the digitisation of audio content. More recently he has been involved in producing and editing videos using RESP audio recordings.

Dr Neill Martin is Senior Lecturer and Head of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. He studied at the universities of Stirling, Dalhousie, McGill and Edinburgh. His undergraduate and Masters degrees were in English and Music, later developing an interest in ethnology and folklore before competing his PhD in the field of ritual and language in Celtic-language societies. His publications extend across festive culture, oral poetry, ballads and traditional belief. He has been Director of EERC since 2020.

Caroline Milligan is Archives Assistant with the RESP Archive Project and Research Assistant and editor with the EERC. Caroline was involved in the initial RESP pilot study. As well as preparing the finding aids for RESP resources being added to the Project website, she has an active role in supporting the work of the RESP in the community and has edited a number of EERC publications including two in the Regional Flashback series, *Stranraer and District Lives: Voices in Trust* (2017) *and Border Mills: Lives of Peeblesshire Textile Workers*, Ian MacDougall, (2023)

Mark Mulhern is Senior Research Fellow at the EERC. He was one of the editors of *Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology* and is currently responsible for management of 'Spoken Word' strand of the *Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project*. In addition, he is General Editor of the *Flashbacks* and *Regional Flashbacks* series. With a background in bio-medical research and Scottish history, Mark has worked at the EERC since 2003.

Dr Kenneth Veitch has been a researcher with the EERC since 2001. A former editor of the *Review of Scottish Culture* (2003-2012), he manages the Written Word strand of the Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project. This includes the *Sources in Local History* series, a freely accessible, online collection of transcribed and edited documents that can be used to study the everyday lives of Scots from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

https://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/celtic-scottish-studies/research/eerc

The Director of EERC is Dr Neill Martin
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Editor

Dr Valentina Bold, University of Edinburgh

Editorial Board

William George Black "Neomagus," and Folk-Medicine (1876)

Stephen Miller

"The term above, 'folk-medicine,' is one for which I confess myself responsible, having first (so far as I am aware) used it while writing some articles in a provincial newspaper." (Black, 1878) So wrote William George Black in 1878, "the term above" referring to the simple one-word title of his article in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, namely "Folk-Medicine." That "provincial newspaper" was found to be the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* and the year to be 1876. (Anon, 1876) It was located through only a single reference in the *Glasgow Herald*, digitised as part of the British Newspaper Archive (BNA), as there is a gap in the coverage of the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* in the BNA, the issues for 1870–78 missing at present. However, a microfilm copy is available at the British Library at St Pancras in London, and the mention in the *Glasgow Herald* gave a date to allowed the articles to be found. And as for "Neomagus," that was the pseudonym chosen by Black to sign his pieces. He makes just one further appearance (in the BNA at least) as "Neomagus," when in the following year he sent in a query about Holy Wells to the "Our Folk-Lore Column" in the *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald,* an Ayrshire title. (Black, 1877) Black mentions this column in one of his three contributions to the thread in *Notes and Queries* started off by Eliza Gutch (as "St Swithin") in 1876, over the founding of a Folk-Lore Society (the similar one in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* is also referenced in another of his pieces there). The Folk-Lore Society of London was founded not that long after in 1878, and Black was later appointed in 1882, as the Local Secretary of the Society for what was termed "South Scotland," with "North Scotland" being parcelled out to the Rev. Walter Gregor, the Church of Scotland minister for Pitsligo in Aberdeenshire. By that date, the Society had published Gregor's *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland* in 1881, and Black's own *Folk-Medicine: A Chapter in the History of Culture* was to soon follow in 1883. (Black 1883)

WILLIAM GEORGE BLACK (1857–1932)

As regards Black himself, he was born on 23 December 1857, in Milton, Glasgow, into a family of prominent Scottish lawyers; his father's firm was Black, Honeyman, & Monteath, his father's cousin that of James Black & Co., while his grand-uncle had founded the firm of Black & Wingate. Black was educated at the Glasgow Academy, the Albany Academy, and at Glasgow

University, "in all of which he took prizes." He spent some time at the University of Göttingen in 1879, and in 1884, he became a partner in his father's firm. He was a frequent summer visitor to Heligoland, "where a singularly cosmopolitan society was gathered during the summer months," no doubt making good use of his German honed in Göttingen. A number of his contributions to *Notes and Queries* often refer to Heligoland, and and his book *Heligoland and the Islands of the North Sea* appeared in 1889, translated later that same year into German. It was until 1890, a British possession, having been seized from Denmark in 1807, and subsequently annexed in 1814. Whilst his death in 1933, was announced in the pages of *Folk-Lore*, no obituary was to follow; unsurprising given that his original work was done so early. (Folk-Lore Society, 1933) His original folklore contributions had ended after the appearance of *Folk-Medicine* in 1883, and his later years were taken up with the authoring of legal articles and numerous standard texts on Scottish law and legal matters, besides a number of smaller pieces on local antiquarian topics. On an architectural note, Lion Chambers in Glasgow, an eight-storeyed building in the city centre, built between 1904–07 for Black, was an early example of the use of reinforced concrete in construction. (Cusack, 1985) Continuing the theme, his brother-in-law, the publisher Walter Blackie, had earlier in 1902, commissioned Charles Rennie Mackintosh to build The Hill House in Helensburgh, finished in 1904.

(For fuller biographical details and a list of publications, see (Miller, 2008). Missed obituaries notices are (Anon, 1932b, Anon, 1932a). Note that the *Glasgow Herald* for 1932 has yet to be digitised by the BNA. See too, (Anon, 1933).)

"FOLK-MEDICINE," GLASGOW WEEKLY HERALD (1876)

As regards Black "writing some articles in a provincial newspaper," this was found to be a series of eight articles starting on 4 November 1876 in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* and appearing weekly under the running title of "Folk-Medicine." Black opens his first contribution with the following statement:

> Before commencing a short series of papers on the subject of folk-medicine, it may be well to state that there is no intention to introduce any topics which more strictly belong to the scientific study of medicine, but simply to lay before our readers some account of the various remedies which have been, and are even yet, resorted to in the more ordinary ailments by the more or less ignorant or half-educated. Many of these will no doubt seem sufficiently absurd, but it would be wrong to suppose that they were in every case originally so. (Black, 1876b)

Whilst not that much later in 1878, Black as seen points out his role in the coinage of the term "folk medicine," here there is no sense whatsoever of its novelty, and that it is being used for the first time in English. He does not provide any clue as to how he came to the topic of folk-medicine, there is no note or statement of intellectual curiosity, and Black simply starts in on the matter in hand. Covered in the second article was (2) Hooping Cough, followed by (3) Toothache, and then (4) Ague, (5) Blood Staunching, (6) Rheumatism

and Cramp, (7) Fevers, and, to end the series, (8) Minor Ailments. (Black, 1876c, Black, 1876d, Black, 1876e, Black, 1876f, Black, 1876g, Black, 1876h, Black, 1876i) The first article was reprinted in the *East of Fife Record* in its issue of 17 November 1876, the BNA showing this to be a one-off occurrence and there was no wider reproduction of the series. (Black, 1876a)

As regards works drawn on, Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871) is mentioned by Black, along with John Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* (1849), Benjamin Thorpe, *Northern Mythology* (1851), and as periodicals, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, *Notes and Queries*, and the compilation, *Choice Notes from Notes and Queries* (1859). Scottish works drawn on were John Brand, *A New Description of Orkney, Zetland, Pightland-Firth and Caithness* (1703), and John Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland, Illustrated from History and Practice* (1834). Robert Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England, or, the Drolls, Traditions, and Superstitions of Old Cornwall* (1865) was also used, and wider afield, there was Rachel Busk, *The Folk-Lore of Rome* (1874), and William Baillie Grohman, *Tyrol & the Tyrolese* (1876). These are all familiar titles at the time, though missing is any mention of Thomas Joseph Pettigrew, *On Superstitions Connected with the History and Practice of Medicine and Surgery,* published in 1844. (Pettigrew, 1844) Whilst it is later referenced by Black in his *Folk-Medicine* from 1883, a number of its chapters lay down themes later developed there, "Talismans," "Amulets," and "Charms" being the most obvious ones.

Returning to the newspaper series itself, the final article appeared on 23 December 1876, which coincidentally was Black's own birthday—as he was born in 1857, this made him just nineteen at the time of publication, a remarkable achievement which showed you why he had earlier won prizes. His last piece in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* ended with the statement that:

> The present series on articles on Folk-Medicine close with this paper, not from any lack of materials for to exhaust the subject would be scarcely possible—but lest some may have grown weary of ever hearing only of disease and superstition. But the subject in the writer's opinion is not undeserving of more attention being drawn to its study, and he hopes at no very distant date, perhaps, to again have the pleasure of illustrating at somewhat greater length certain of the curious aspects of Folk-Medicine. (Black, 1876i)

He was true to his word, with *Folk-Medicine: A Chapter in the History of Culture* appearing in 1883, and it later appeared in Spanish translation with editions being published in 1889 and the following year of 1890, as well as a third one in 1901(?). (Black, 1889, Black, 1890, Black, n.d. [but 1901?]) For a recent reprint, (Black, 1982). It is the only title from The Folk-Lore Society's publications (in the Extra Volumes series) that appeared in translation in this period.

WILLIAM GEORGE BLACK: FOLK-MEDICINE, VOLKSMEDIZIN

Earlier in 2008, I advanced the thought that Black was simply translating the German language

term "Volksmedizin" into English. This assumed that he developed his interest in the topic whilst studying in Germany. Whilst as seen, Black was at the University of Göttingen in 1879, his article in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association,* where he talked of his coinage of the term folk-medicine, appeared the year before in 1878, which somewhat undercut the argument even at the time it must be said, and now his contributions to the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* date, as can be seen, from 1876, and with that year so the very term folk-medicine itself. The piece in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* was a paper delivered by Black before the BAA in the first week of January 1878, where incidentally G.L. Gomme was present and who made a pitch for The Folk-Lore Society that was to be first constituted at the end of that month. (Anon, 1878a) In November 1878, at the annual meeting of the Glasgow Archaeological Society, Black spoke on "Common sympathetic recipes for the cures of disease: a chapter of folk medicine." (Anon, 1878b) The title of the paper is reported in (Anon, 1878c) Returning to the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* pieces from 1876, he was remarkably just nineteen at the time, and University in Germany was still to come, by which time he had in any case established folk-medicine as a term. It is difficult to see him coming into contact with German language titles in the field in Glasgow before he headed off to Saxony to study at Göttingen (from where, completely unrelated, Pettigrew had received his doctorate). Now close on one hundred and fifty years since Black's coinage, and with no explicit mention at the time, and nothing since for that matter, all we can say at the end of the day with assurance is that William John Thoms, an English antiquarian, was responsible for coining folk-lore in 1846, and William George Black, as a Scottish youth, folk-medicine in 1876.

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Folklore Material in Ruaraidh Erskine's Gaelic Magazines

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INTRODUCTION

The corpus of dedicated research on the five Gaelic magazines founded by author and activist Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar (Ruaraidh Arascain is Mhàirr, 1869–1960) in the first three decades of the twentieth century is still limited, but those critics who have engaged with them tend to stress their ambition to support new literature and focus on contemporary affairs. According to Donald John MacLeod (Dòmhnall Iain MacLeòid), Erskine 'held that Gaelic writers, instead of continuing to produce a basically peasant literature or mimicking third-rate Scottish and English exemplars, ought to aim at the same standards as the best European writers of their time' (1969: 21) and 'deployed his own capital and his remarkable resources of ideas and of energy to rid Gaelic literature of the influence both of its "peasant origins" and its new "enthusiasm for the music hall" and so to raise it to the same level as the best of English literature' (1976: 210). Derick Thomson (Ruaraidh MacThòmais), who had a lifelong interest in Erskine's work, observed that he 'concentrated on Gaelic writing and publishing in particular, seeing a need to extend the literary range and reinvigorate literary standards, moving away from the music-hall tendency and from the emphasis on folk-culture, and bringing written Gaelic into the modern world' (1998: 287).

MacLeod and Thomson naturally emphasized what they perceived as innovative and influential features of Erskine's periodicals, which were also those that reflected their own preoccupations. This image of the periodicals, while entirely justified on one level, nonetheless downplays the substantial engagement with folklore material and traditional Gaelic culture, which was not innovative in the sense of differentiating Erskine's ventures from other Gaelic magazines of the time, as similar content appeared regularly, for instance, in *An Deò-ghréine*, the magazine of An Comunn Gàidhealach, but it should not be disregarded.[1] The decision to include this type of content reflects not only the interests of the editor and the contributors but also practical concerns, such as the availability of older anonymous material which was ready to be republished, retold, and translated without copyright strictures. Furthermore, attracting a broader readership, catering to its tastes, and drawing attention to the long and diverse history of Gaelic culture, including its traditional elements, was part of the magazines' revivalist agenda. This essay is the first attempt to examine folklore and traditional

material in the corpus to provide a more nuanced understanding of the magazines' profile, the networks of contributors involved in them, and their influence on following Gaelic initiatives.

THE MAGAZINES

Erskine's first venture into Gaelic periodical press was the bilingual monthly *Am Bàrd* ('The Poet', 1901–1902). Even the first issue (May 1909) reveals the characteristic mixture of radical and innovative content and more approachable items, and a substantial involvement with folklore and traditional culture. It opens with a praise poem to the magazine by Neil MacLeod (Niall MacLeòid, c. 1845–1913) – already a popular songwriter who could be perceived as a representative of nostalgic traditional poetry – and yet, his name appears regularly in Erskine's periodicals, together with other traditional poets such as Alexander Cameron (Alasdair Camshron, 1848–1933), 'Bàrd Thùrnaig'. Over its relatively short existence, the monthly featured a substantial corpus of folklore material, including retellings of traditional tales with commentary, such as 'A' Ghobhar Ghlas' (June 1901) with commentary by 'Iain', i.e. John MacRury (Iain MacRuairidh, 1843–1907), folktales retold by 'Dearg MacDhonnchaidh', which was a pseudonym used by Charles Moncrieff Robertson (1864 –1927), and a discussion of the traditional way of counting sheep in Welsh, 'Àireamh nan Caorach' (September 1901), by a contributor using the pseudonym 'Loch-Aic'.[2] 'Loch-Aic' also supplied the Gaelic retellings of the Manx tale 'Am Buggane' (June 1901), about the shapeshifting being endemic to the island's folklore, and of the Welsh story 'Na Leth-Aonan Sìth' (June 1901). These three pieces tie in with the important pan-Celtic dimension of the magazines which involved not only articles reporting on congresses and contributions by influential representatives of local revivalist movements but also interest in the traditional culture and folklore of fellow Celtic countries.

Furthermore, *Am Bàrd* reveals Erskine's contact with the Edinburgh Gaelic scene and with the influential family of the folklore collector and compiler of *Carmina Gadelica* Alexander Carmichael (Alasdair MacGilleMhìcheil, 1832–1912). The fifth issue of *Am Bàrd* published an advertisement for the upcoming programme of the Celtic Union (September 1909), presided over by Alexander Carmichael and Robert Blair. The list featured, among other events, talks by Ella C. Carmichael (Ealasaid C. NicGilleMhìcheil, 1870–1928), who, apart from being Alexander's daughter and assistant, was a respected Celtic scholar in her own right, and by Erskine himself. While Ella Carmichael published several pieces in *Am Bàrd*, no contribution by Alexander Carmichael himself has been identified with certainty so far, but he constitutes one of the major presences in the magazines in terms of references and appreciative comments.[3]

The quarterly *Guth na Bliadhna* ('The Voice of the Year', 1904–1925), Erskine's most viable project, was initially bilingual and switched to all-Gaelic content in 1919. Some directions evident in *Am Bàrd* were developed further in the quarterly, including the interest in the tales of the Fianna. The summer issue of 1904 included a prose tale

about Fionn, 'Sgeulachd Gharaidh', singed by 'A. McD'. The same tale was later reprinted in *An Sgeulaiche* ('The Storyteller', 1909–10 monthly, 1910–11 quarterly), this time with the note that it was 'air a chur sìos leis an Athair Gilleasbuig Dòmhnullach nach maireann' [recorded by the late Rev. Archibald MacDonald] (1909: 298).[4] Similarly, *Guth na Bliadhna* followed the pan-Celtic preoccupations, including the publication of folklore material from other Celtic countries. The very first issue of the quarterly (Winter 1904) featured 'A Connaght Love-song' (Da mbeith 'aitreabh agam fein), with English translation by 'An Craoibhín Aoibhinn' [the pleasant little branch], which was the established *nom-de-plume* of the Irish scholar and revivalist Douglas Hyde (1860–1949), later the first president of Ireland. Over the years, Hyde made several other contributions, in all cases but one Irish poems and songs presented with his translations into English: 'Mallachd', the transcription of a curse composed by an anonymous Irish poet in County Kerry (Spring 1904), a selection of Irish religious poetry 'Dàin Naomha Èireannaich' (Spring 1905), and 'A Mhuire nan Gras', transcribed from the oral recitation of a shepherd in the Aran Islands (Autumn 1916). These contributions reflect Hyde's activities as a Gaelic scholar and represent an important complement to his political and public presence.

Guth na Bliadhna provides more proof of Erskine's contacts with Celtic scholars and folklore collectors and experts, often connected to the University of Glasgow. Already in *Am Bàrd* (May 1901), Erskine published an article on 'Celtic Manuscripts' by Magnus MacLean (Mànus MacGill-Eain, 1858–1937), the first lecturer in Celtic at the University of Glasgow. The very first issue of *Guth na Bliadhna* featured an appreciative essay 'Gaelic Literature and Professor Kuno Meyer' and an unattributed translation of a poem included in Meyer's anthology *Ancient Irish Poetry* into modern Gaelic by 'Alasdair Beag.'[5] Meyer (1858–1919), a German scholar who specialised in Celtic philology and served as MacCallum lecturer in Celtic at the University of Glasgow in 1903–1906, constitutes another large presence in Erskine's magazines.[6] Apart from a letter reprinted in *Am Bàrd* (August 1901) where Meyer expresses his support of the magazine and highlights the importance of international cooperation between Celtic countries, there are no contributions clearly attributable to him, although it is possible he was using a pseudonym. Extracts from Meyer's *Selections from Ancient Irish Poetry* (1911) were regularly featured, usually with a translation into Scottish Gaelic provided by Erskine's regular contributors Malcolm MacFarlane (Calum MacPhàrlain, 1853–1931) and Donald Sinclair (Dòmhnall Mac na Ceàrdaich, 1885–1932). When Meyer died in October 1919, Erskine reflected on his demise in the next issue of the quarterly (Winter 1919), and a series of Sinclair's translations from *Ancient Irish Poetry* was published from the spring until the autumn of 1920, as an immediate tribute to the scholar's life and work.

The essay on Meyer and Gaelic literature also criticises the underused potential of Scottish manuscript collections: 'Our national MSS. (a

rich and valuable collection) lie untranslated in the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, principally because those who would like to translate them are incapable of doing so; whilst those who could do so lack either the time or the inclination to translate them' (1904: 26). In the following years, the quarterly indeed endeavoured to contribute to a change in this respect.

Guth na Bliadhna also published more recently collected folklore material. The autumn issue of 1905 included the tale 'Ciad Mhac Rìogh Afraca' with the note: 'An so sìos focal air an fhocal leis an Ollamh Seòras Mac Eanraig o bheul-aithris Iain Mhic Fhiongain, an Dalabrog, Uibhist Chinn a Deas' [This was recorded word by word by Dr George Henderson from the oral recitation of John Mackinnon, Dalibrog, South Uist] (1905: 353), and with further commentary by George Henderson about the tradition bearer, his style and manner of delivery, and the story itself. Henderson (Deòrsa MacEanraig, 1866–1912), who became a lecturer in Celtic at the University of Glasgow after studying in Edinburgh, Oxford, Berlin, and Vienna, is another respected scholar contributing to Erskine's magazines and, like Hamburg-born Meyer, had strong links to Celtic studies in Central Europe.

Some of the folklore submissions came from the pen of major Gaelic literary figures. Allan MacDonald (Ailean Dòmhnallach, 1859–1905) published his poem 'Eilein na h-Òige' in the second issue of *Guth na Bliadhna*. According to Ronald Black's bibliography (2002: 505), MacDonald is also the likely transcriber of several prose folktales that appeared in the quarterly in 1904–1905, signed as 'Iain Mac an Tàilleir' and 'Alasdair Ruadh'. The winter issue of 1909 published the folktale 'Cath nan Ian a Bha 'n Eirinn', transcribed by John MacCormick (Iain MacCormaig, 1860-1947) from the recitation of Alasdair MacLucais in Mull. MacCormick was a prolific contributor to Erskine's magazines in a number of genres, from original prose to essays and a comic play, and he had a lifelong interest in the history and tradition of his native Mull.

Over the spring and summer issue of 1912, the quarterly published 'A' Bhean-Nighe, or Loireag', a substantial two-part essay on the figure of the 'washing woman' in Gaelic folklore, signed by the pseudonym 'Sìthiche'. The essay provides a summary of the figure's appearances with extensive quotes and detailed references to manuscript sources, the work of scholars including John Gregorson Campbell, John Francis Campbell, Ella Carmichael, and Alexander Carmichael, and articles in academic journals and the periodical press, and information from tradition bearers, as the essay refers to a statement from 'Alasdair Ross, of Colbost, Skye' which 'Sìthiche' 'took down from his lips' (1912b: 338). Apart from these, it also features more surprising references to figures such as the novelist Maria Corelli and the Irish leader Charles Stewart Parnell, and to the euhemeristic view of the fairies and changelings, proposing that they are in fact an aboriginal human tribe which predated the Celts in the British Isles and has been developing separately.[7] All these features would indicate Erskine's authorship.[8] When 'A' Bhean-Nighe' was later republished as a separate booklet in the series *Leabhraichean nan Ceilidh*,

there was no indication of authorship either. The series reprinted articles, stories, and plays from Erskine's magazines and included at least forty-six numbers, but due to their ephemeral quality, they were not frequently acquired by libraries (MacLeod 1969: 61). The essay about the washing woman was reissued as no. 38. However, the authorship is revealed in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* XXXIV, where John G. Mackay indicates in Footnote 66 to his essay: 'See my monograph on this creature, A' Bhean-nighe (*Guth na Bliadhna*, IX, pp. 195, 333)' (1927-28, 64). This attributes him beyond doubt as 'Sìthiche,' and illustrates the intricacies of attributing anonymous and pseudonymous content among Erskine and some of his regular contributors, due to shared interests and common preoccupations of the time.

In the same issue as the second part of 'Bean-Nighe', *Guth na Bliadhna* featured the folktale 'Rogailleach Mac an Orracaillich', which was accompanied by the following note: 'Is i so sgeulachd air na làithean a dh'aom air a h-ìnnseadh le Alasdair Camshron, Achadh-mòr, Poll-iù, mar bu chleachdadh aithris aig a' chèilidh' [This tale of bygone days was told by Alexander Cameron, Achadh Mor, Poolewe, according to the storytelling customs at a ceilidh] (1912: 367). It seems most likely that this is Alexander Cameron, 'Bàrd Thùrnaig', who lived in Achadh Mor, contributed poetry to Erskine's magazines, and was supportive of his initiatives.[9]

Other contributions concerning folklore and traditional culture in the quarterly, including transcriptions of tales and essays on topics such as the folksong tradition and proverbs, were supplied by some of Erskine's most prolific collaborators, including John N. MacLeod (Iain N. MacLeòid) and Henry 'Fionn' Whyte (Eanraig MacllleBhàin). They constitute a substantial and fairly regularly distributed corpus, although in the later years, the quarterly drifted more towards new writing and discussion of contemporary affairs.

Guth na Bliadhna, focused as it was on substantial essays and with a strong religious and political agenda, was in 1909 supplemented by *An Sgeulaiche* as a lighter companion which published mostly new Gaelic fiction but also plays, songs, translations, and folklore material. It featured some reprints from the quarterly, including the tales selected by John N. MacLeod. Some of the folktales in *An Sgeulaiche* were presented as reading for children. The weekly newspaper *Alba* ('Scotland'), which first appeared in 1908–1909 and was revived for another run in 1920–1921, interspersed coverage of current affairs with both anonymous and attributed songs. In Issue 34 (26 September 1908), the weekly published the tale 'Nighean Rìgh na Spàinnte' [King of Spain's Daughter], which led to a discussion in the letter sections with contributions from the author and historian Martin Hume (14 November 1908) and from the folklore collector, author, and critic Andrew Lang (28 November 1908).

ERSKINE'S MAGAZINES & JOHN FRANCIS CAMPBELL

Another important aspect of the magazines' engagement with folklore is that they provided a platform for publishing material from the

manuscripts of John Francis Campbell (Iain Frangan Caimbeul, 1821–1885), one of the most influential nineteenth-century collectors of Gaelic folklore, whose four-volume *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* constitute a landmark in the field. Although he could not have made any actual submissions to Erskine's magazines, having died sixteen years before the first issue of *Am Bàrd* came out, Campbell constitutes another important presence in Erskine's periodicals, and material from his archive appeared in three out of five. Erskine could have felt affinity to him in terms of sharing an aristocratic background, moving in fashionable society, and coming to Gaelic as a learner, rather than being brought up in a Gaelic-speaking family, although Campbell had much more immediate access to the language in the community in Islay.[10] In a series of programmatic essays on Gaelic drama, which was a genre he especially sought to further for artistic and revivalist reasons, Erskine recommended topics from Campbell's *Popular Tales* as subject material for symbolist drama in Gaelic:

> No one, I maintain, can take up such a book as Campbell's *West Highland Tales* without being struck by the richness and abundance of the raw material for Symbolic drama therein supplied. What would not the author of *The Blue Bird* – an indifferent example of the Symbolic play – give for such material? Yet, who amongst the Scottish Gael has yet thought of making use of Campbell's collection for stage purposes? (1914: 82)

Here, traditional material meets with revivalist programme for new Gaelic writing aspiring to contemporary European trends, in the manner of Continental revivals (and it would have been interesting to see how Maurice Maeterlinck, the author of the 'indifferent Symbolic play', would have responded to Erskine's proposal). In his own Gaelic plays, which so far has not been subject to any detailed critical analysis, apart from short commentary by Donald John MacLeod (1969: 161–162), Erskine does not follow this advice, and the plays are more reminiscent of the symbolist drama of W. B. Yeats, Auguste de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, and indeed Maeterlinck himself.

In 1885, Campbell left his papers to the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, where Erskine and his collaborators could have accessed them, and the awareness of the richness of the material is evident in the first issue of *Guth na Bliadhna*, as cited above.[11] The first appearance of material from Campbell's manuscripts in Erskine's periodicals was rather inconspicuous. The spring issue of *An Sgeulaiche* in 1911 included the prose tale 'Clann an Rìgh fo Gheasaibh', accompanied by a brief footnote: 'Is ann am measg a cho-chruinneachaidh ainmeil sin aig I. F. Caimbeul nach maireann a fhuireadh an seann-sgeul seo. Faodar a ràdh nach deach a chur an clò riamh roimh seo. Fear *An Sgeulaiche*.' [This old story comes from the famous collection by the late J. F. Campbell. It should be said that it has not appeared in print before. The editor of *An Sgeulaiche*.] (1911: 65). *An Sgeulaiche* was the least scholarly of all Erskine's Gaelic magazines, so readers would likely be most interested in the story itself, rather than in details about its provenance and transmission. However, even in *Guth na Bliadhna*, which was much more academic, the initial presentation

was surprisingly casual. The first tale included in the quarterly was 'Fear a' Bhratain Uaine' which appeared in the autumn issue of 1912 with no attribution whatsoever, but when it came out as a booklet as no. 23 in *Leabhraichean nan Ceilidh*, it was introduced as 'seann sgeul, le I. F. Caimbeul, Iain Òg Ìle' [an old tale by J. F. Campbell, Young John of Islay].

The third tale, 'Iain Òg, Mac Rìgh na Frainge', which was brought out in the winter issue of 1914, was introduced with more care:

> From Roderick MacNeill, labourer, Glen, Barra. 'Heard it from many old men of whom are those already mentioned'. From the unpublished M. S. Collections of the late J. F. Campbell of Islay, listed in the famous *West Highland Tales*, Vol. IV, page 402, as tale 31. Campbell says of the story on the flyleaf to it, 'One of the regular Highland stories which have nothing earthly to do with books of any kind that I ever read – quite peculiar.' (1914: 479–480)

This indicates a growing attention paid to the presentation of folklore material. In the following year, 'An Tuairisgeal Mòr' appeared in two parts, in the summer and autumn issue of 1915.[12] This time, it was not a mere reprint of the tale alone but a substantial critical essay which analyses and compares 'two unpublished versions of this wild story were found in the magnificent MS. Collections of the late J. F. Campbell of Islay' (1915: 218), draws on other sources, and provides detailed commentary about the versions, vocabulary, sources, a list of related stories, and the stories themselves in Gaelic.

'An Tuairisgeal Mòr' is signed by 'I. M. A.', which is undoubtedly John G. Mackay (Iain MacAoidh, 1869–1942).[13] Mackay was involved already in *Am Bàrd*, supplying a regular section on Gaelic idioms, and he was also an active member of the London Gaelic scene, which is likely where Erskine made his acquaintance (Gillies 1990: 517). Mackay also published tales from Campbell's manuscripts in *An Deò-ghréine*, with translations and intended as learning materials. Eventually, he went on to translate many of the folktales collected by Campbell, and he edited the two-volume *More West Highland Tales* (1940 & 1960), in which he included the tales that had previously appeared in Erskine's quarterly.[14] The possibility to publish the tales in Erskine's magazines seems to have been an important prequel to these subsequent developments in making more material from Campbell's manuscripts available to readers and scholars, although these early appearances are not mentioned at all in the introductory material supplied by Mackay and other scholars in *More West Highland Tales*.

Guth na Bliadhna featured two more tales from Campbell's manuscripts, but these were presented in connection with John Dewar. Dewar (Iain Mac an Deòir, 1802–1872) was one of the collectors who supplied transcriptions of material to Campbell.[15] Their presentation in Erskine's quarterly stresses the importance of the content but draws attention to Dewar's interference and suggests that they fail to reach the same standard as those by Campbell himself.[16] The story 'Mogan Dearg Mac Iachair', which appeared in the winter issue of 1913, is accompanied by a note that includes information about the tale and the transcription from Campbell's manuscripts,

and further discourse on the tale with references to Campbell's *Popular Tales*, J. G. Campbell's *Superstitions, Waifs and Strays*, and other sources on the topic of the 'tamhasg' in general. This commentary is not attributed, but it was probably supplied by John G. Mackay.

The second tale transcribed by Dewar, 'An t-Uirsgeul aig na Rìghrean, Rìgh na h-Iuraibhinn agus Rìgh nan Ailp', appeared in the spring issue of 1916 with the note: 'I heard this from a servant maid, that was in my father's employment, some time before 1812' (1916: 140). Again, it is accompanied an unattributed note, likely by Mackay, which theorizes about the age of the tale and asserts that the 'magnificent story' is 'spoilt by the Transcriber, Dewar, who alters his Gaelic to fit English (as J. F. Campbell himself remarks)' (1916: 140), putting Campbell forward as the ultimate authority but also making readers aware of how transcription and presentation shape the way oral tradition is preserved.

In 1917, Erskine published the first issue of *An Ròsarnach* ('The Rose Garden'), a lavishly produced annual which featured mostly essays, new writing, and illustrations. The volume concluded with the folktale 'Nighean Rìgh-fo-Thuinn', attributed in the list of contents as 'seann-sgeulachd fo làimh Iain Mhic Aoidh' [an old tale presented by John Mackay]. It opens with a transcription of Campbell's English summary of the tale, preserved on the back side of a page on which the story was written down. At the end of the tale, it includes the following information: 'From Roderick MacLean, Tailor, Ken Tangval, Barra, who heard it frequently recited by old men in South Uist, about fifteen years ago. One of them was Angus MacIntyre, Bornish, who was about 80 years of age at the time. (Fios tha so a chaidh a thoirt seachad le Eachann MacGilleathain)' [Information from Hector MacLean] (1917: 227). The same tale had also been included in the third volume of *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, with the same attribution as to the tradition-bearer.[17]

In *An Ròsarnach*, the story was accompanied by three original illustrations by Andrew Scott Rankin, credited as 'A. Sgott Mac Fhraing'. Scott Rankin (1868–1942) was a painter and a native Gaelic speaker from Aberfeldy who supplied several original artworks for the annual. The same tale is the subject of a drawing by John Duncan, which appeared in D. A. Mackenzie's *Wonder Tales from Scottish Myth & Legend*, also published in 1917. In contrast to Duncan's elegant, elongated figures and characteristic focus on ornament and decoration, Rankin's three illustrations are much more robust, even humorous, and reminiscent of visuals for a children's book. Nonetheless, they lend the tale a visual prominence and testify to the importance accredited to Campbell's work and to the tradition preserved thanks to it by Erskine and his collaborators, as Erskine would have decided about which content was to be illustrated and organize the commissions accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Apart from their proclaimed support for new Gaelic writing, Erskine's Gaelic magazines continuously provided a platform for bringing out important folklore material, contributed to the dissemination of previously unpublished tales

from J. F. Campbell's manuscripts, and attracted some of the most influential Celtic scholars and collectors of the time as their contributors. They did not present folklore and tradition as the well of Scottish nationhood and the only source of Gaelic culture but integrated them as one of the core aspects. This dimension has rarely been mentioned in the limited corpus of existing scholarship. Engaging with folklore material from Erskine's magazines opens a new perspective onto the development of Celtic studies, changing practices of collecting, publishing, and presenting folklore material, and onto the careers of major collectors and scholars, including hitherto overlooked interests and achievements.

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Endnotes

1 For complete overviews of the magazines' contents and a database of contributors, see 'ERSKINE: Exploring the Gaelic Magazines Founded by Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar', https://erskine.glasgow.ac.uk/ [accessed 11 September 2025]. There is also a dedicated section listing 'Folklore Material and Traditional Tales', https://erskine.glasgow.ac.uk/topics/folklore-material-and-traditional-tales/.

2 Sheila Kidd has brought to my attention the letter 'Highlanders and the Gaelic in Liverpool' from *Oban Times* (17 November 1900), signed by 'Loch Aic, Liverpool'. It could therefore be somebody from Kuno Meyer's circle, as he lectured at Liverpool University for almost thirty years since 1895, possibly even Meyer himself.

3 One possibility is the article 'Ancient Holy Wells in Scotland' from *Guth na Bliadhna* I: 4 (1904), signed with the initials 'A. C.' – the same Alexander Carmichael used in when contributing to the *Highlander*. I am grateful to Ronald Black and Sheila Kidd for leads in this respect. Erskine composed a poem upon Carmichael's death which appeared in *Guth na Bliadhna* IX: 3 (1912).

4 Given the indication MacDonald had passed away by this time, it cannot be the scholar and translator Rev. Archibald MacDonald (Gilleasbuig MacDhòmhnaill, 1853–1948) of Kiltarlity, otherwise a likely candidate.

5 'Alasdair Beag' could be Erskine himself, or possibly John G. Mackay, for reasons outlined below.

6 See 'Prof. Kuno Meyer 1903–1906', *Sgeul na Gàidhlig aig Oilthigh Ghlaschu / The Gaelic Story at the University of Glasgow*, https://sgeulnagaidhlig.ac.uk/20th-c-department-of-celtic/?lang=en [accessed 12 October 2024].

7 In this respect, the essay taps into a similar idea as Arthur Machen in stories such as 'The Shining Pyramid' and 'The Red Hand'. Given Machen's Welsh origin, his involvement in the London magazine scene in the 1890s and in the Hermetic Order (another member, John William Brodie-Innes, delivered a lecture for the Celtic Union in Edinburgh in December 1901, in the same series as Erskine), and his interest in Celtic Christianity, it is tempting to consider possible influences within the Celtic circles in London, not merely the general climate of the period.

8 Ronald Black, in his introduction to *The Gaelic Otherworld*, an edition of J. G. Campbell's *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, suggests that 'Sìthiche' is indeed Erskine himself, and lists him, alongside David MacRitchie and W. C. Mackenzie, as the 'proponents of the racial theory' of the Fairies' (2005: xxvi).

9 However, the story is not included in the volume that brought together Cameron's prose, poetry, and letters: Moffat-Pender, I., ed (1926), *Am Bàrd: Òran, Sgrìobhaidhean, is Litrichean: Bàrd Thurnaig (Alasdair Camshron)*, Edinburgh: Urquhart & Son.

10 As Black and Dreacup note, Campbell grew up in the island and 'the Gaelic part of his education was seen to by his father's piper, John Campbell from Lorn (1795–1831)' (2024: 11).

11 In 1925, the collection was presented by the Faculty of Advocates to the National Library of Scotland, which has held it since (Adv.MSS.50.1.1-51.2.7), https://manuscripts.nls.uk/repositories/2/resources/16292 [accessed 11 September 2025].

12 This volume of the *TGSI* featured several regular contributors to Erskine's magazines, including James MacDiarmid (Seumas MacDhiarmaid, 1851–1930), Alexander 'Gleannach' MacDonald (Alasdair MacDhòmhnaill, 1860–1928), and Hector MacDougall (Eachann MacDhùghaill, 1880–1954).

13 Not to be confused with John Mackay of Hereford (1822–1906), originally from Sutherland, likewise a Celtic scholar, author of publications on the place-names of Sutherland and the Highland Regiments, and president of An Comunn Gàidhealach in 1895–1896; and John Gunn Mackay (1848–1924), born in Lochalsh, an expert on Highland tartans, one of the leaders of the movement supporting the Valtos crofters in 1881, and a Portree businessman. For information about them, see Loughran (2018).

14 These were: 'An Tuairisgeal Mòr' and 'Iain Òg, Mac Rìgh na Frainge' in *More West Highland Tales*, Vol. I, and 'Mac an Rìgh agus Fear a' Bhratain Uaine' and 'Clann an Rìgh fo Gheasaibh' in *More West Highland Tales*, Vol. II.

15 Dewar's writings are currently the subject of the Dewar Project, which seeks to transcribe, analyse, and publish his ten manuscripts. The first volume, *John Dewar's Islay, Jura, and Colonsay*, ed. Ronald Black and Christopher Dracup, was published in 2024.

16 As Black and Dreacup note, Campbell would supervise and annotate Dewar's work, leaving notes in the manuscripts in margins, on the versos, or on separate sheets of paper, including general observations, comments on the stories, and remarks concerning Dewar's style (2024: 11–12).

17 'LXXXVI: Nighean Rìgh fo Thuinn', in Campbell, J. F., ed (1862), *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* Vol. III, Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, pp. 403–422. It is preceded by the same commentary as in *An Ròsarnach*,

which however omits Campbell's reasons to include the tale: 'as it shews one of the Ossianic heroes in very mythological character' (403).

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‘Buaile bheag do na laoigh’ (a wee fold for the calves) Historical cattle management for milk production

Gavin Parsons

The Highlands and Islands of Scotland contain only small areas of land suitable for cultivation. Most of the land area is rough pasture, suitable, in terms of agriculture, only for grazing animals. Pastoralism has therefore been a necessary part of existence and cattle were the main grazing animals until large flocks of sheep were introduced at the time of the clearances, from the late 18th century onward. Cows were kept primarily for their milk, which was at the centre of the domestic economy. This paper looks at how this was achieved practically, at how cows and calves were managed so that a milk yield was available. Although there have been studies of songs sung at milking and of life at shielings, there has been little written about the actual management of cattle. In this paper I will investigate the oral and material culture around milking and its significance in the social, agricultural, cultural and economic systems of the Gaelic speaking areas.

BACKGROUND

Historically in Gaeldom, meaning Gaelic-speaking areas of both Scotland and Ireland, cows were of considerable importance at all levels of society. As A.T. Lucas states in his extensive study *Cattle in Ancient Ireland* (1989:4):

> The cow was the measure of everything; it was the unit of value; the ultimate in poverty was the man with only one cow, the wealth of the richest consisted of vast herds of them.

Cattle were long seen as currency, in fact they were the measure of wealth in the time of the Early Irish Laws which were first written down around the 7-8th centuries AD and continued to be for centuries. The Annals of Connacht record that 126 cows were paid as éraic (penalty for homicide) for the killing of Grigóir Ó Maolchonaire (Kelly 1988: 112-114).

That such measure of wealth was still used as late as the beginning of the 17th century is shown in the “Statutes of Iona” which were agreed in 1609 and contained an order that men of substance should send their eldest sons to school in the lowlands. The measure of substance was “in goods worth three score kye” – everie gentleman or yeaman within the said Ilyndis…being in goodis worth thriescore ky (MacGregor 2006).

Cattle were the target of raids from the time of the Celtic hero tales to the late Middle Ages, and in some cases later, throughout the Gaelic speaking areas of Ireland and Scotland. One of the earliest cattle raiding tales within the Irish tradition is *Táin Bó Cúailnge* the centrepiece of

the legendary tales from the "Ulster Cycle" of early Irish literature, which survives in manuscript form from the 12th century, but probably dates back to the first century AD (Meyer 1906). In this tale a battle is fought over the Ulster bull Donn Cúailnge which Queen Medb of Connaught wishes to steal to augment the value of her herd. One of the latest in the Scottish tradition is an account of the "last cattle raid in Skye" carried out by a group of MacMillans from Loch Arkaig, and which took place "not long after the Battle of Culloden" (MacInnes 2006:149).

Particularly in the century after the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles in 1493, known as *Linn nan Creach* or the "Age of Forays", cattle raiding was rife. Martin MacGregor comments that "The fundamental form of warfare [in Gaelic Scotland] was the *creach*, or cattle raid…" (2014:216). Raids were an opportunity for young nobility to prove their worthiness to lead men in combat, and as in other tribal societies, cattle raids were not regarded as petty thievery. As Alison Cathcart has stated, raiding was such an important part of Highland culture that it was "an integral part of the clan structure itself." (Cathcart 2002:165).

Even though raiding had died out before the end of the 18th century, cattle maintained their position at the centre of the domestic economy. Milk products were valuable both as foodstuffs and as rent. Before money rents became common, rents were paid in kind, although grain might be part of the rent in more fertile districts, cheese and butter were commonly required in the less productive areas (Withers 1988 p209). Isobel Grant's book *Highland Folk Ways* (Grant 1961: 65-67) gives a description of how milk and milk products (butter, crowdie, cheese, whey) were until recent times a major part of the diet of Highland people over a large part of the year. Grain production in pre-crofting times was predominantly carried out on the "infield" close to the byre where cattle were in-wintered and that ground received annual dressings of manure.

In the traditional crofting system, cattle were still the source of much fertility. Frank Fraser Darling in his comprehensive West Highland Survey (1955: 216) describes how the dung from the byre contributed to the fertility of the machair soil in Uist.

> Even the dung is something special and of a quality rare to-day, for the floor of the byre in past times was laid with divots from the peaty moor, the scrabhan. These soaked up the urine and the byre was not cleaned out until the spring, by which time the animals were rubbing their horns in the rafters. The dung had been kept away from the leaching rain and was well compacted, and as it contained the urine in suspension there was a high content of potassium, so necessary for the barley crop on machair which is short of this element.

Cattle therefore were a major part of life and economy in Gaeldom, contributing greatly to soil fertility and from their milk and milk products to daily fare and providing a means to pay for goods or services.

Most milk production was in the summer months, after cows had calved in the spring and when grass was plentiful. Transhumance was common historically and survived until after the second World War in some places (Cheape 1996).

The cattle were moved to upland, or moorland, pastures (shielings) to take advantage of fresh grass at higher altitudes and to keep them away from growing crops in ground under cultivation. Much of the dairy work was carried on in shieling huts and the products carried back to store for the winter months (Cheape 1996).

There is an interesting example relating to sheiling huts and butter production. *Loch an Ìme* (Loch of the Butter) is a small loch in Baravaig, in the Sleat peninsula of Skye. It is situated close to a site with footings of a number of small, turf-built circular or ovular buildings which was noted during a community archaeology survey as part of *Scotlands Rural Past*, the project which ran from 2006 to 2011 and which photographed, and documented many sites throughout Scotland. The relevance of the loch's name in relation to the close siting of the row of small buildings was shown by an entry in Forbes' Placenames of Skye which stated:

> *Loch an Ìme* The loch of the butter. Near here some kegs or rather parcels of butter made up in hides were found. (Forbes 1923: 386)

The combination of these strands of information create a compelling case that the buildings were sheiling huts and the loch used to store butter made by the people using the huts. This example shows the extent to which we can gain remarkably deep insights into how people managed cattle within the landscape and the value placed on dairy products, by combining a knowledge of landscape archaeology, with an understanding of place names and oral tradition.

The day that cattle, dairy equipment and household effects were moved up from the village to the shieling was an important one in the calendar. The significance of the *triall* or journey to the shieling is shown by these descriptions, from Alexander Carmichael's collection *Carmina Gadelica*:

> Throughout Lewis the crofters of the townland go to the shieling on the same date each year and they return on the same date each year. The sheep and cattle know their day as well as do the men and women, and on that day the scene is striking and touching – all the "nì", flocks are astir and restless to be off, requiring all the care of the people to restrain them and keep them together in the proper order. (Carmichael 1972: 190)

On arrival at the shieling, there was a check on all the livestock:

> *"Laoidh an triall"* – …(on the first day of May). This is the day of migrating from "*baile gu beinn*" [village to hill]…when the grazing ground is reached, the loads are laid down, the huts repaired, fires kindled and food made ready. The people bring forward their stock, each man his own, and count them into the fold. The herdsman of the townland and one or two more men stand within the gateway and count the flocks as they enter. (Carmichael 1972: 191)

Although men and women were together in the *triall*, for the most part, in managing cattle, their different roles were well defined. Given the importance of cattle, it is not surprising then that in a society with a strong oral culture, there exists a wealth of songs about cows and milking. Evidence for this can be seen in the collection *Ri Luinneig mun Chrò* in which Seònaid Ghriogair (2016)

has gathered almost three hundred such songs. These songs give an insight into the importance of milk cows and how they were viewed by the women who milked them. This evidence suggests that milking was traditionally done by women and though men certainly milked cows in the 20th century, I have not come across any reports of men milking in earlier times.

MILKING MANAGEMENT

To examine the practicalities of milk production, we need to remember the biological basis on which milk is produced: A cow produces milk after calving (birth of a calf). The milk yield increases for the first few weeks after calving and then gradually decreases as the calf becomes more able to digest grass and less dependent on the milk. At around ten months after calving the milk yield is usually so low that to maximise production it makes sense to get the cow to calve again twelve months after the previous calving, so if she is "dried off" ten months after calving she gets a two month rest. Since a cow carries a calf for nine months she needs to be bulled (mated) around two to three months after calving. In natural conditions cows would calve in the spring and this means that the time of the highest milk yield corresponds with the summer flush of grass. If calves are kept along with cows, they will suckle their mothers at frequent intervals, so for cows to have milk available for humans to milk off, calves need to be kept away from the cows for several hours, preferably overnight, to allow the milk produced to accumulate in the udder. This

Fig 1 – Cròcach – somewhat barbarous examples dating from the 19th Century.
Image © National Museums Scotland

can be done either by some kind of screen on the nose of the calf (e.g. a device known as a *còcach,* see fig 1) or by holding calves separate from the cows. Modern dairy farms remove the calves from their mothers altogether and feed them milk or a milk substitute. When both calves and humans are competing for the milk, the cow will naturally favour the calf, so a certain amount of coaxing may be required to be able to obtain milk for human consumption, if the calves have been allowed to bond with their mothers.

How then, was milk production achieved in Gaeldom? From various sources, which I will consider, it seems that from ancient times calves were not removed entirely from their mothers as is the usual practice on modern dairy farms. The importance of keeping cows and calves separate is illustrated in the traditional Irish tale "Death of Fergus":

> When Iubhdán, king of the fairies, was held captive by Fergus, his people threatened Fergus that they would wreak havoc unless he released Iubhdán: All Ulster's calves we will admit to their dams, so that by morning time there shall not in the whole province be found the measure of one babe's allowance of milk (O' Grady 1892: 279).

In the early Irish Law texts, offences against domestic animals are listed. One example shows both the importance of milk to society and also indicates how cows were managed to maximise milk production:

> A similar offence is to leave an opening so that a farmer's calves can gain access to the cows. The culprit must provide restitution of the shortfall in the milk-yield (Kelly 2000).

A.T. Lucas suggests that shutting cows away from calves at night continued until recently:

> It seems to have been the universal practice to drive the cattle into an enclosure at nightfall… This custom continued through medieval times down to recent centuries (1989: 25).

Songs and recordings also suggest that this was the usual practice, calves were always present somewhere nearby, so some means of keeping cows and calves separate was needed during the summer months when cattle were at pasture.

> – Keeping hungry calves from the cows would have been a virtually impossible task if the two were grazed within sound or sight of each other, so we must visualise separate herds of cows and calves being driven abroad from their night enclosures at widely separated intervals of space and time (Lucas 1989: 21).

This is shown by the naming in many songs and oral sources of various types of enclosure which were used to keep cattle in.

Referring to eighteenth-century surveys, Robert Dodgshon in his comprehensive history of Farming, Landscape and Environment in the Scottish Highlands and Islands *No Stone Unturned* mentions kailyards, penfolds and other small stock pounds that were widely present by the early eighteenth century (2015: 155).

Landscape archaeologists have recorded such enclosures in many parts of the country but there seems to have been little work done to interpret how these enclosures functioned. A field survey of two townships on the west side of the island of Raasay (Macdonald and Wood 1995) recorded the remains of many small enclosures close to

sites of dwelling houses. Some of these, at least, could well have been used to hold calves away from cows, but this would be difficult to identify without excavation and was not speculated on in the report.

An extensive and detailed survey was carried out over the whole of Tiree in 2016 and again this recorded numerous remains of structures which included possible stores and animal pens. Though the editors state that only where they feel reasonably confident has an original function been attributed to a feature. In most cases these functions are suggestions only.

Scotland's Rural Past, mentioned already, (2018) was a five-year, nationwide project, which supported local communities across Scotland with training in landscape archaeology and equipment to enable them to carry out measured surveys, to investigate the landscape archaeology in their area. Groups involved in the project which ran from 2006 to 2011 photographed, and documented many sites throughout Scotland, including the Highlands and Islands. I was involved with one group, working in Camuscross and Baravaig in the Sleat peninsula of Skye. The survey identified remains of several individual agricultural holdings which could clearly be interpreted. One of these, is shown at fig 2.

A dwelling house is easily identifiable at the right-hand side of the plan, with a probable midden outside the door, as it is a hollow, down a slope from the doorway, enclosed by a turf wall to hold the manure. This suggests that livestock, most likely the milk cows, would have been kept in one end of the house, as was the common practice (e.g. Kissling 1943: 82). In the middle is a barn, identified by the two opposing doors

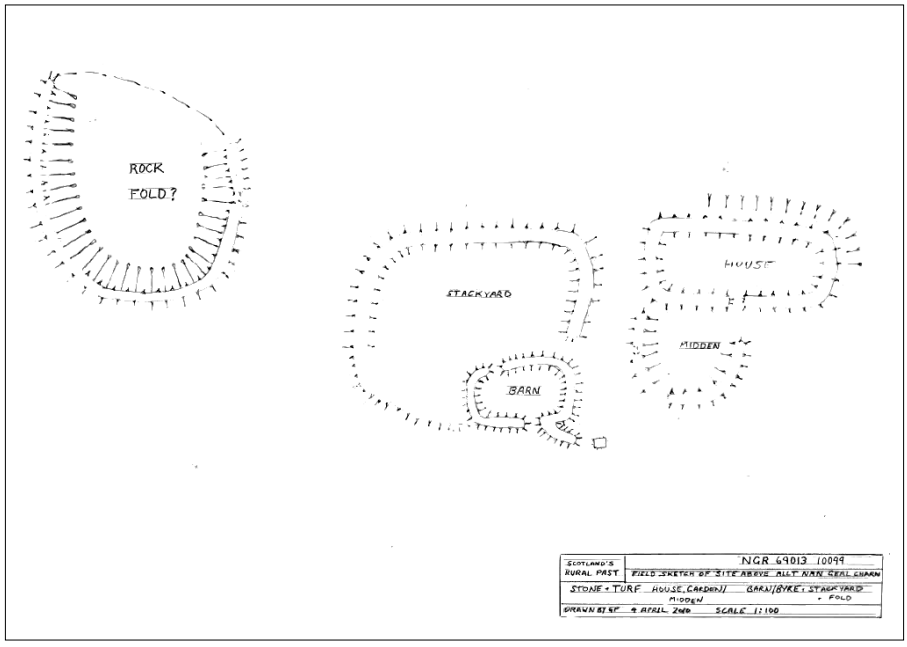

Fig 2 Plane table diagram of a settlement site near Allt nan Carn in Sleat, Skye.

which would have been used to create a draught for winnowing. The adjoining enclosure suggests a stackyard, where oats or other grains would have been stacked in the sheaf. On the left is a further enclosure and this is on rocky ground, with a rise or hillock in the middle of it, therefore not suitable for cultivation or for building stacks. The size and topography of this enclosure and proximity to the house and barn is highly suggestive that this is a fold for animals such as calves to be kept away from their mothers in the byre/dwelling house.

Several different names have been used for such folds and I'll now look at these and at how they were used. *Buaile* is one of the commonest names for a fold with many songs mentioning a *buaile*. Here is an example in a waulking song collected by K C Craig from Uist tradition bearer Màiri Nighean Alasdair (Craig 1949: 55):

Bheir mo shoraidh gu m' eòlas
Take my greeting to my kent one

Gu Fear òg Bhòrnais Uarach
To the heir of Upper Bornish

Aig àm an crodh seasg
At the time of the barren cattle

Dol san fheasgar ron bhuachaill
going in the evening before the herdsman

's aig am biodh an crodh bainne
Tighinn nan deannaibh dhan bhuailidh
and whose milk cattle would race to the "buaile "

Buaile also occurs frequently in placenames. The word *buaile* might be used for an enclosure at a shieling as shown in this traditional account of cattle breaking out during the night. This incident was the basis of a song by Beathag Mhòr who worked as a milkmaid for the Martins of Bealach in Trotternish, Skye at the end of the 18th Century.

Bha a' bhanarach agus an òigridh *eile nan suain chadal am bothan an* àirigh *nuair a bhrist an crodh a mach as a' bhuaile. Sud far an robh an* ùbraid. *Sud far an robh an spòrs , ann am meadhon oidhche shamhraidh iad uile nan ruith a' cuartachadh a' chruidh agus na laoigh* òga *nan cois mus dèanadh iad call dhaibh fhèin agus do chuid chàich. Cha do stad an crodh gus an do ràinig iad an cladach ann an Lag na Feamainn. Bha an latha geal* òg *mhadainn shamhraidh mun robh an crodh cruinn agus sàbhailt air ais air an* àirigh. *Tuairisgeul* – (Buidse 1973)

The milkmaid and the other youngsters were sound asleep in the shieling bothy when the cattle broke out of the fold. That's when the turmoil began. That's where the fun was, in the middle of a summer's night, everyone running to head off the cows and the young calves with them before there would be any loss to themselves or other's property. The cattle did not stop until they reached the shore at *Lag na Feamainn* [Seaware hollow]. It was a bright summer morning before the cattle were back together and safe at the shieling.

It is not clear where the calves were, but once they were along with the cows it seems that they bolted to the shore at *Lag na Feamainn*. The song relates this incident.

Tha fonn gun bhith trom composed by *Beathag Mhòr* was published in Christine Martin's book of Skye songs *Òrain an Eilein* (Martin 2001: 130):

Bhrist an crodh a' bhuaile
The cattle broke out of the fold

'S an t-suain air a' bhanaraich
while the milkmaid slept

Nuair a chual i 'n èigheach
When she heard their bellowing

Ri lèine chan fhanadh i
She couldn't wait to put on a shirt

Fhuair mi leisgeul àluinn
I got a great excuse

Bha dhà 'n Lag na Feamainn dhiubh
Two of them were in Lag na Feamainn

Several other words are recorded in addition to *buaile* meaning some kind of enclosure for cattle. The word *fang* (fank) though more commonly used for an enclosure for sheep was used by Donald Sinclair of Tiree in a recording from 1968:

> Domhnall Mac na Ceardaich (1968)
>
> "*Mairt san fhang tron oidhche – buachaille bhon Chèitean gu Oidhche Shamhna*"
>
> [the cows in the fank through the night – a herdsman from May until Halloween]

Another word used is *cuidh* or *cuidhe*. Dwelly's dictionary gives a range of meanings for this word:

> 1. Enclosure. 2 Cattle-fold, pen — *Barra.* 3 Enclosed field — *Eigg.* 4 Trench, hollow artificially formed as a sheltered place to milk cows in on the grazing ground.

This is borne out by respondents in South Uist, one of whom described a *cuidhe* as a small park of about an acre with a stone wall round it. Another respondent described a *cuidhe* as a place about 10 yards by 10 yards, closed in by stone walls. Within living memory these were used to pen cows during the night in summer, or in the case of the one acre *cuidh*, calves were penned there, both night and day. The word *cuidh* also appears in several placenames, particularly in Uist e.g.

As described by Archie MacAulay, Ileray, North Uist:

> *Cuidh Mhalacleit* a small park at Malaclete,
>
> *Cuidh Loisgte* (– burnt) another small park in Hoighearraidh "ceap a chaidh na theine" (a lump that went on fire)
>
> *Cuidh nan Laogh* (– of the calves) – " this was a square shaped enclosure"

The word *cotan* is used for a small pen used to confine young animals, either lambs or calves (Dwelly). A *cotan* at a shieling was described by Donald MacDonald of North Tolsta as a "*buaile bheag*" (a small fold) to keep calves in overnight so that they would not suckle the cows (MacDonald 1978).

Crò also appears, as an enclosure, in songs such as the well-known *Crò Chinn t-Sàile*, and in *An Leannan Sìdh* (The Fairy Sweetheart) collected by Alasdair Carmichael and published in the *Carmina Gadelica*.

An Leannan Sìdh

Cha tèid mi a Luan nan Luan
I'll not go on any Monday

Cha tèid mi a chrò nan uan
I'll not go to the lamb's crò

> *Cha tèid, cha tèid , na chrò nan laogh*
> I'll not go to the calves crò
>
> *O nach bheil mo shaoghal buan*
> Since my life will not last
>
> (Carmichael 1954: 153).

It seems clear then, that cows and calves were kept separate at night, so that cows could be milked the following morning, and in some cases at least, also kept separate through the day so that they could be milked in the evening. The question to ask now is: what happened at milking time? Alasdair Carmichael gives a rather flowery description without too much detail (Carmichael 1972: 259):

> It is interesting and animating to see three or four comely girls among a fold of sixty-eighty or a hundred picturesque Highland cows on a meadow or mountain slope. The moaning and heaving of the sea afar…the lowing of the kine without, the response of the calves within the fold, the singing of the milkmaids in unison with the movement of their hands, and of the soft sound of the snowy milk falling into the pail…constitute a scene which the observer would not, if he could, forget.

Osgood MacKenzie in *A Hundred Years in the Highlands* gives a more practical description of what actually happened at milking time when he quotes an account written by his uncle John Mackenzie of the twice daily milking routine. A date is not given except that it is from the time of the generation before Osgood, who was born in 1842. There is no mention in this description of any enclosure, only of a dyke, a hundred yards long which kept the cows and calves separate. At milking time the milkmaids entered:

> among the mob of bawling cows by one of the small calf gates in the wall…A young helper stood at each gate with a rowan switch to flick back the over-anxious calves till old *Domhnall* [the head cowman] sang out, looking at a cow a dairymaid was ready to milk, named, perhaps, *Busdubh* (Black muzzle), 'let in *Busdubh's* calf', who was quite ready at the wicket. Though to our eyes the sixty black calves were all alike, the helpers switched away all but young *Busdubh*, who sprang through the wicket; after a moment' dashing at the wrong cow by mistake, and being quickly horned away, there was *Busdubh* junior opposite to its mother's milker sucking away like mad for its supply, while the milkmaid milked like mad also, to get her share of it… and then calfy was dragged to the wicket and thrust out, and perhaps *Smeòrach*'s (Thrush's) calf halloaed for next. This uproar lasted from six til nine, when justice having been dispensed to all concerned, Domhnall and company drove the cows away to their pastures, and the junior helpers removed the very discontented calves to their quarters til near 6 pm when the same operation was repeated. (MacKenzie 1995: 25).

When a cow and calf are not separated altogether as in these examples, then the cow will generally not let down all her milk unless the calf is present and preferably suckling. This is the reason for letting the calf in to suck at the same time as the milkmaid was milking. In my own experience over a lifetime of milking cows, if the cow keeps back some of the milk, it is always the cream that she keeps back, but if the calf is suckling on the other side of the cow, the mother

lets down all the milk.

The same system was described by John MacDonald of Kyles Paible in North Uist when he was asked about the duties of the *buachaille* [herdsman] in conversation with Eric Cregeen of the School of Scottish Studies in 1973. Kyles Paible was a township of six crofts.

> They used to have more than one *buachaille*, especially in this township. They used to have a *buachaille* for the cows. They used to have a *buachaille* for the calves, and the calves were kept separate from the cows, and this was going back about 70 years ago. Now, the cows were taken into the fold, about 10 o clock in the morning, then the *buachaille* or the herd of the calves, he was taking over the calves to the cattle fold. And each crofter had a small gate on the side of the cattle fold and this crofter's calves would go straight to their own gate, with the result that the cows were waiting on the other side of the gate for the calves and all the crofter and his wife had to do was to let in the calves one by one, to have their share of the milk… turn it out again, and bring in another one, milk the cow then, they were only getting one half, one side of the udder to milk. And that's the way they were working them in those days. The cows were then let out of the fold at 12 o clock, and the calves were turned away to a field of their own, and left there for a period of time after having their milk and then the *buachaille* would take them on to another field where they were grazed during the rest of the day till it was about 8 o clock or 7 o clock in the evening and the same routine was gone over again. The cattle were in the fold all night, and the calves were in a field of their own (MacDonald 1973).

The practice of allowing the calves to suckle the cows and also milking them for human use, seems to have become less common through the twentieth century. In conversations with crofters in their 70s and 80s from Harris, Raasay and South Uist all of them stated that in their lifetimes it had been usual to remove calves altogether from milking cows and to feed them milk from a bucket. However, in my own experience, during a summer spent in Iona in the nineteen seventies, on several crofts, calves were allowed to suckle mothers which were also milked. I heard this described on farms in Mull, and in Skye, as "the crofter's way" of keeping a milk cow.

A cow whose calf has been removed altogether is normally much more accepting of being milked than one that is expecting to be suckled by a calf, and this may be the reason that a *buarach* (fetter) was often used to prevent a cow from kicking. These often feature in songs.

There is a story in Alasdair Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica* of a poor widow whose heifer would not accept her calf and who appealed to Calum Cille (Saint Columba) for advice. Calum Cille composed for her a charm to sing to the heifer. It starts with:

M' aghan gaolach, na bi t' aonar
My beloved heifer, be not alone

Biodh do laoghan air do bhialaibh
May your little calf be before you

And concludes:

Tha an t-agh dubh air tighinn gu rèite
The black heifer is reconciled

Nì thu do luran geuma
You'll low to your pretty one (calf)

Thig thu dachaidh le na treuda
You'll come home with the herds

Caisgidh tu pathadh nan ceuda
You'll quench the thirst of hundreds

According to the story, the widow went home and sang the charm to her heifer and the heifer took the calf. The widow then sang her thanks to Colum Cille which included the verse:

Cha ghluais e rium cas no ceann She
moves not against me foot not head

Cha ghluais e rium eang no taobh
She moves not against me hoof nor side

Lìonaidh e an cuman dh'an chlann
She fills the pitcher for the children

An dèidh a theann a thoir dhan laogh
after giving the calf its fill.

This confirms that she could not milk the heifer without the calf being there to suckle and so when at first the heifer wouldn't accept the calf, she had no milk for her children. Possibly because cows were expecting to be suckled by their calves, they wouldn't stand so well to be milked and would thus need some special treatment to keep them quiet, either some kind of restraint to physically keep them still, or some special feeding to hold their attention.

A *buarach* (fetter) is mentioned frequently in songs; *Carmina Gadelica* has several examples of milking songs where the "*buarach*" features. For instance:

Oidhche sin bha 'm Buachaill a-muigh
The night the Herdsman was out

Cha deacha buarach air bòin
No fetter went on a cow

Cha deacha geum a beul laoigh
No bleat came from the mouth of a

Caoineadh Buachaill a' chruidh
calf for the cattle Herdsman

Caoineadh Buachaill a' chruidh

(Carmichael 1972: 266).

'S i mo rùnsa an t-aghan cais-fhionn
My love is the little white-footed heifer

Chan iarr I buarach a chur mu casan
She needs no fetter about her feet

Nuair a bhiodh cach anns na siomain naisgte
When the others are bound with rope

'S e sìod a Sasunn bhiodh air mo ghuail-fhionn
It's English silk on my "white-shoulder"

(Carmichael 1972: 268).

A.T. Lucas gives a description of what a buarach consisted of:

> *The buarach of recent times consisted of a short length of rope, often a two-ply one twisted from the long tail hairs of cows and horses, with a loop at one end. At the other end was a rounded piece of wood three or four inches long, with a groove in the middle in which one ply of the rope lay tightly, holding the stick in a position transverse to the extended rope. The rope was passed around one of the hind legs above the hoof, crossed on itself and then secured around the other hind leg by passing the stick through the loop.* (Lucas 1989: 44).

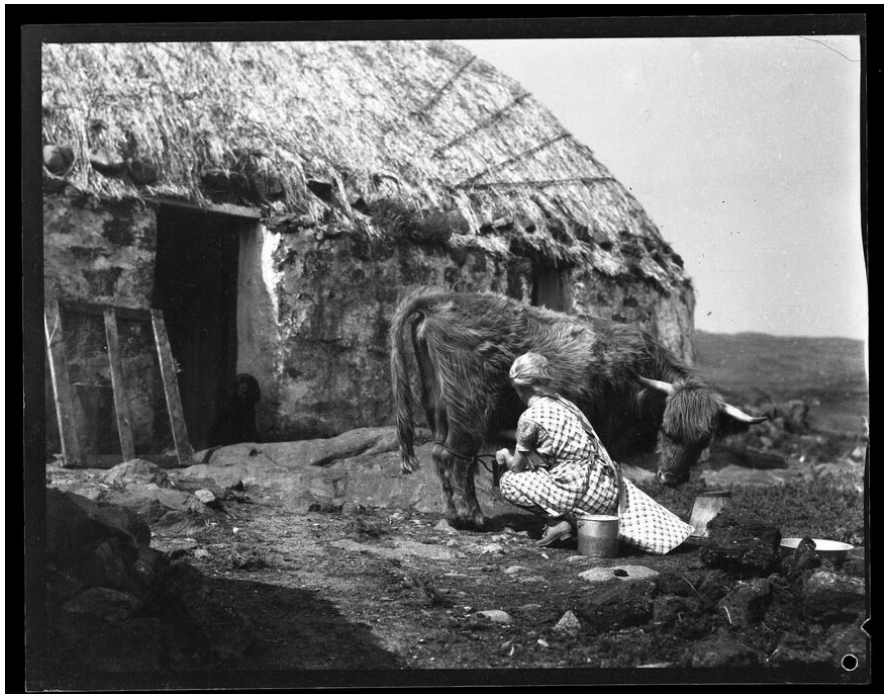

Fig 3 – Margaret Fay Shaw's photograph of Màiri MacRae milking Dora (© National Trust for Scotland, Canna House), showing the use of a fetter.

Some milkmaids, it seems, were, through their own nature and experience, able to quieten a difficult cow. There is an account in *Carmina Gadelica* vol IV P75 of Mary MacNeill known as *Màiri Raghnaill* who was head milkmaid with the MacNeills of Barra:

> The crossest cow that was ever in MacNeill's fold, Mary could quiet her and make her give milk to calf and to milkmaid. She had a musical voice and a rare way with her.

The other method of keeping a cow quiet is to give her feeding which is highly desired. A somewhat unlikely feed is described in *Carmina Gadelica*:

> While being milked the cattle eat the fodder which the girls and women have brought in creels. This fodder is not so much grass as vegetables of various kinds, some of them of the most unpromising quality, such as nettles, dockens, ragworts, chickweed, common rushes and bulrushes. These the Lewis cattle eat with relish as a change from the heather and tussock grass of the moorland (Carmichael 1972: 38).

More recently, calves were often separated entirely from crofters' house cows and never allowed to suckle them, however one crofter, from Raasay, told me that they would keep the calf beside the cow in the byre " so that they would be near each other, so that she would let down the milk better, the cow would know that the calf was there."

A crofter from the Bays of Harris explained that calves were shut away from the cows in the byre and then when the cows were milked outside

in the summer, above the dyke at the back of the crofts, the calves would be tethered on the crofts. When they were milking outside the women would take a creel of grass pulled from the potato rig to keep the cow steady. They would use a fetter if they needed to, but some cows would stand "as steady as a rock".

As we have seen, the evidence from written sources, oral tradition, songs, placenames, material culture and landscape archaeology suggests that the practice of holding calves away from cows overnight was a long established pattern of dairy-centred animal husbandry within Scottish Gaeldom, going back many centuries. The remnants of these practices remain embedded within the Gaelic language through the different terms for such enclosures (*crò, fang, buaile, cuidhe, cotan*), and in the landscape where some still exist and can be identified on the ground. My own practical experience of milking cows and crofting agriculture has been invaluable for interpreting these linguistic and archaeological signs. It is hoped this theory is further tested and applied by other researchers into oral tradition and landscape archaeology to build a fuller understanding of the central importance of a dairy-based cattle culture in shaping how individuals and communities in Gaeldom lived their daily lives and designed and built their structures and material culture.

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Slavery, Commerce, and Art: Kelvingrove House and The City Industrial Museum

Arun Sood

INTRODUCTION

On Thursday, May 2 1901, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum opened to the public, along with two other temporary exhibition halls, as one of the main attractions at the Glasgow International Exhibition. Billed as the 'Palace of Fine Arts', the new building – designed by John W. Simpson (1858-1933) and E J Milner Allen (c.1859-1912) – was to become the permanent home of Glasgow's municipal art and museum collections.

Upon its grand opening, festival organisers and city representatives lavished praise on the 'glittering domes' and 'bannered turrets' of the extravagant new gallery which, over a century later, remains one of Glasgow's proudest tourist attractions (*Glasgow International Exhibition* 1901: 23; Lamont 2015: 267). In 2014, Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum was unanimously voted the most popular 'Glasgow landmark or place' among visitors to the *How Glasgow Flourished* exhibition; while Kelvingrove Park was fourth behind the Trongate, The University of Glasgow, and The Glasgow School of Art.

However, the history of its demolished predecessor, the City Industrial Museum (previously known as Kelvingrove), near the modern-day gallery (see Fig. 2), is less known and largely undocumented. The purpose of this article is to provide more information on the early history of Kelvingrove House, by adopting an interdisciplinary approach combining primary archival research with the analysis of material culture, maps, and museum collections. However, I also aim to situate this cultural excavation within wider heritage initiatives relating to the recovery of Glasgow's historical links with the transatlantic slave economy, underlining the possible significance of Kelvingrove House to ongoing curatorial work and policy.

THE CITY INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM: AN EARLY HISTORY

Formerly located adjacent to Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, where the River Kelvin curves north-eastwards in Kelvingrove Park (at the site of the present-day Kelvingrove skatepark), the City Industrial Museum opened in 1870 after the Glasgow Corporation approved proposals to convert an unoccupied late-eighteenth century residential property – Kelvingrove House – into Glasgow's first civic museum. Proving extremely popular, the museum collections swiftly outgrew the house's 'limited exhibition space' and plans

Fig 1: Kelvingrove House or the 'City Industrial Museum' as it appeared, c. 1870. Photograph by Thomas Annan (*Old Country Houses* 1970: B5), by permission of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.

for relocation and permanent storage became an 'imperative necessity' by 1874. Even after a substantial extension to the house was completed in 1876, a sub-committee of the Parks and Galleries trust (specifically assigned to manage museum affairs) reported that 'every inch of available space' was occupied; hence the planning and construction of Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum towards the turn of the twentieth century (*Report* 1876: 3).

The 1901 Glasgow International Exhibition, which showcased the city's cultural prowess whilst simultaneously offering visitors a wider idea of the 'world's progress' in 'industry, science and art of all nationalities', provided the perfect occasion to unveil the new gallery (*Pearsons* 1901: 6 and see Lamont 2015: 222-61). However, in the months leading up to the exhibition, debates were waged over what to do with the original Kelvingrove House (or the City Industrial Museum as it was then officially known) seeing as it would no longer be required as a municipal museum space.

Complaints were lodged against 'the drainage of the old building' and the planning executive, following the suggestion of commissioned architect James Miller (1860-1947), decided to demolish the 'old mansion' so that visitors might benefit from 'an uninterrupted view over the park to the west' when visiting the exhibition restaurants (see *Glasgow Citizen* 1898). Though the removal was opposed, particularly among architectural circles that believed the house to

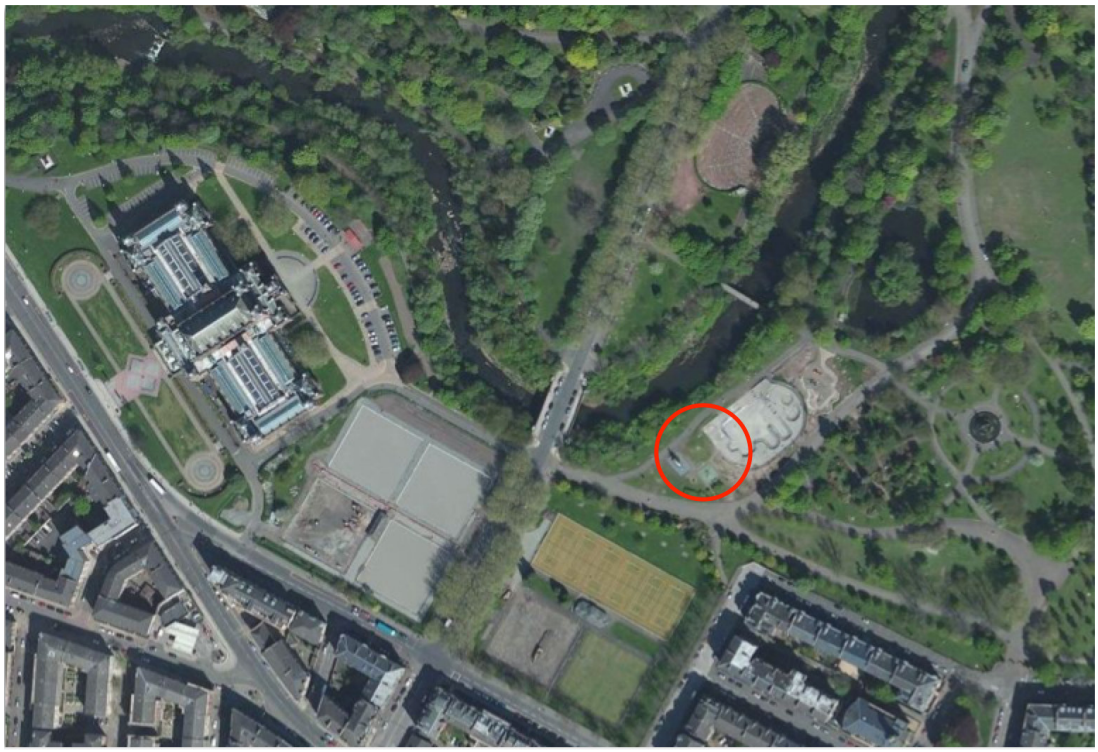

Fig 2: Google Earth image of present day Kelvingrove Park. The red circle identifies the former site of Kelvingrove House/The City Industrial Museum.

be an invaluable Robert Adam (1728-1792) design, the demolition went ahead in time for the exhibition opening.

The 'museum annexe', or extension, erected between 1874-86 was not, however, demolished but converted into the 'Japanese Pavilion' for the purpose of the 1901 International Exhibition. Subsequently, the extension was briefly used as the 'Jeffrey Reference Library' when Robert Jeffrey of Crosslee House donated his collection of books to the Glasgow Corporation in 1902. It was later demolished after the Jeffrey collection moved to its permanent and current home, the Mitchell Library, in 1911 (see 'Robert Jeffrey Library' and 'Jeffrey Library).

As the official guide stated in 1901: 'old Kelvingrove House, has been cleared away, and will only be seen again in pictures.' (*Glasgow International Exhibition, 1901*: 31).

This study traces the origins, early owners, and residents of Kelvingrove House up until its conversion to the City Industrial Museum in 1870. Rather than explore the City Industrial Museum as a functioning civic institution (a topic that merits further attention in its own right), the focus will be on the pre-museum period, with a particular focus on the merchants who owned the house before it was sold to the Glasgow Corporation in 1852. By taking this approach, a series of wider interrelated themes – mercantile wealth, slavery and architecture among others – will begin to emerge, and not without some

contestation and ambiguity.

Questions remain, for example, over whether Robert Adam was ever involved in the design and construction of the house; over the complicity of Patrick Colquhoun (1745-1820), the father of 'Kelvingrove' and the man who financed the construction of the house, in the transatlantic slave trade; and conversely over the abolitionist leanings of the house's second owner, John Pattison (1755-1807). Intertwined into the historical recovery of the long-demolished house are, then, contentious issues surrounding the mercantile activities and politics of its pre-museum proprietors.

In light of the relatively recent scholarly push to recover 'Scotland's slavery past', these issues and ambiguities are significant, particularly at a time when Glasgow's cultural institutions continue to address the 'complexities that constitute memories of slavery in the twenty-first century' (see Devine 2018; Mullen 2009; Morris 2015; Landsman 2001: 60 – 93, 94 – 136; Hamilton 2005; Fry 2001: 70 – 82; Devine 2003: 221 – 49; Devine 2011; Nisbet 2009; Graham 2009; Devine 1978). Indeed, a timely reconsideration of Kelvingrove House in this context inherently poses further questions about how Glasgow's civic institutions might approach the recovery and representation of their own historical links – direct or indirect – with slavery and colonial commerce.

PATRICK COLQUHOUN & THE ORIGINS OF KELVINGROVE

"To the sons and daughters of Saint Mungo the name 'Kelvingrove' has for generations sounded like a note of music." (*Regality Club* 1899: 86).

By the turn of the twentieth century, the very name 'Kelvingrove' had apparently come to sound, according to an 1899 *Regality Club* publication, 'like a note of music' to the citizens of Glasgow. However, despite the above allusion to Saint Mungo, the name 'Kelvingrove' is far from ancient. It first came to prominence in the early 1780s when Patrick Colquhoun purchased two subdivisions of Nether Newton ('woodcraft' and 'Berrie-dyke') in order to build a 'country retreat' which he named 'Kelvingrove' on account of the 'fine old timber' that stood next to River Kelvin (*Old Country Houses*: 61).

At this time, the area presently known as Kelvingrove Park was divided into two sections: Nether Newton formed the lower part and was bordered by Sauchiehall Street to the South and Woodlands Road to the East, while the Northern, or elevated, part of the park was known as Woodside and included the present-day Park Terrace, Park Circus and Woodlands Terrace. As the nomenclature suggests, this area was scarcely developed in the eighteenth century and mainly comprised of woodlands, drumlins and 'undulating meadowland' (*Old Country Houses* 1870: 61).

In 1782, Colquhoun reportedly acquired twelve acres of Nether Newton from the son of Alexander Wotherspoon, writer in Glasgow, and just one year later he had laid out ample 'pleasure grounds', 'extensive gardens', a 'range of offices' and crucially, built a country mansion which came to be known as Kelvingrove House (*Old Country Houses* 1870: 61). While the appellation, 'Kelvingrove', has certainly stood the test of time, transforming and reinventing itself through

Fig 3: 'Roy Military Survey of Scotland', Lowlands 1752-55. The lower part of (what is presently known as) Kelvingrove Park is comprised of the wooded area 'Nether Newton' which Colquhoun purchased in 1782 (Roy 1752 -55).

various civic redevelopments in different ages, the story of Colquhoun and his original mansion has, as previously stated, largely been neglected.

Patrick Colquhoun has largely been remembered for two main reasons. First, he was the founder of Glasgow's Chamber of Commerce in 1783 (during which time he was also Lord Provost); and second, he led and instigated 'pioneering police reform in London' where he lived and worked from 1792 until his death in 1820 (Barrie 2008: 60).

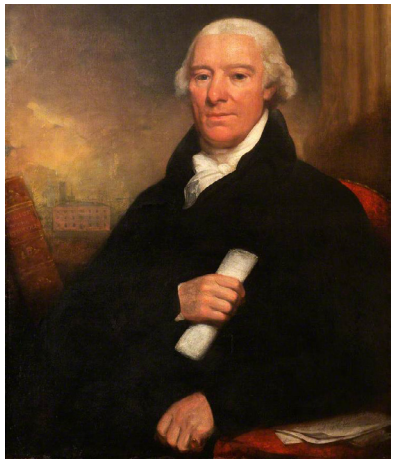

Fig 4: Portrait of Patrick Colquhon (Colquhoun)
Image credit: Thames Police Museum

In addition to historiography, this dualistic legacy continues to be materially maintained by the portraits that still hang, hundreds of miles apart, in the Glasgow City Chambers' and The Thames Police Museum (see 'Thames Police Museum'). Moreover, as recently as 2012, a 'Colquhoun Dinner' was held in Glasgow; a tradition which began in 1938 to commemorate Glasgow's 'Illustrious Forbears' in commerce and industry.

At the first 'Colquhoun Dinner' the keynote speaker R. A. Maclean, praised Colquhoun

for playing 'a leading part' in Glasgow's civic progress, particularly by 'developing the cotton industry.' Colquhoun has also been described as 'one of the great Glaswegians of the Eighteenth century', and commemorated by the University of Glasgow's Department of Economic and Social History through the Colquhoun Lectureship in Business History (see *Colquhoun Dinner Papers* 1944; *Glasgow Herald* 1969).

The purpose here, however, is not to further reflect on Colquhoun's role in establishing Glasgow's chamber of commerce, his contributions to social theory or his efforts in founding the Thames Metropolitan police. Rather, it is to situate him among a late-eighteenth century Glasgow 'mercantile elite' who had various business interests including colonial trade (see Pieris 2007; Cooke 2012). As socio-economic historians of Glasgow continue to probe contentious connections between eighteenth-century mercantile wealth and slavery, it is perhaps unsurprising that Colquhoun, and correspondingly his 'Kelvingrove' country estate, should come under fresh scrutiny.

COUNTRY MANSIONS, COLONIAL TRADE AND SLAVERY

The proliferation of country houses in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has garnered much scholarly attention, with the focus commonly being on architecture, lavish collections and stately significance. More recently, however, historians have begun to explore wider connections between landed wealth, country houses and the Atlantic slave economy. There is a growing awareness that British country houses were often built from the proceeds of colonial trade and, in some cases, also provided a way for merchants to cultivate a genteel image that deflected any (direct or indirect) associations with slavery (Dresser and Hahn 2013).

It is clear that Colquhoun's house and corresponding estate was an ostentatious symbol of his elite status and refinement. Yet questions remain over the extent of Colquhoun's – and by consequence his country estate – links with slavery and colonial trade. T.M. Devine has suggested that Colquhoun's Kelvingrove House was similar to James Buchan's 'Virginia Mansion' and John McCall's 'Black House' in that it was an unmistakeable indication of eighteenth-century mercantile wealth (Devine 1994: 164). While the juxtaposition of Colquhoun with these prominent 'tobacco lords' (see Devine 1974) is significant, relatively little is known about his early accumulation of wealth and involvement in the tobacco trade.

An early biography of Colquhoun, written by his son-in-law Grant David Yeats (under the pseudonym 'Iatros'), outlines formative years spent in the 'colony of Virginia, for the purpose of following commercial views.' Returning to Scotland at the onset of the American War in 1766, Colquhoun was a principal contributor to 'a fund for raising a regiment for his majesty's service from the population of Glasgow.' (Iatros, 1818: 5 – 6).

That Colquhoun spent time in Virginia during Glasgow's 'golden age' of tobacco and opposed the American Revolution (which effectively cut out the need for Glasgow merchants) is

significant. As Devine has outlined, there were six main Glasgow-based tobacco syndicates trading in North America: the Cunnighame group, the Speirs group, the Glassford group, the Buchanan-Jamieson group, the Thomson-McCall group and the Donald group (Devine 1974: 'Appendix').

These groups could be broken down further into different sub-companies and individual partnerships. Within the Alexander Speirs group, for example, there were three companies: Speirs, Bowman and Co., Speirs, French and Co., and crucially for the present study, Patrick Colquhoun and Co. (see Peters 1990). While this reveals that Colquhoun directly profited from the tobacco trade, it was in his role as merchant spokesman and politician that he would flourish.

In addition to the impact of the American War, developments in the sugar and cotton industries, along with a heightened interest in West Indian trade, meant that tobacco was no longer the dominant commercial focus when Colquhoun established the Chamber of Commerce in 1783. It should be pointed out, though, that the board of directors did include John Glassford, William Cunninghame and George Bogle among other 'tobacco lords'.

From its establishment, Colquhoun regularly lobbied in London on behalf of Glasgow's merchants and by 1785 he was the leading spokesman for British cotton manufactures whilst also acting as 'the London agent for the planters of St Vincent, Nevis, Dominica and the Virgin Islands'. Colquhoun was one of eleven Glasgow-based merchants who contributed to a fund for 'raising a Regiment, which his Majesty has been graciously pleased to order to be immediately raised for service in the said island' (see Lindebaugh 2003: 426).

Colquhoun's involvement with West India Merchants' can be traced back as early as 1779, when his name appeared on a subscription list of a 'general meeting of the planters and merchants concerned in the island of Jamaica'. His relationship with West India merchants was, in fact, to be longstanding, and a group of London-based West India merchants who encouraged and funded his establishment of the Thames River Police between 1797 and 1800 (see *The Gazeteer* 1779).

In summary, Colquhoun's close links with West Indian merchants (many of whom campaigned against emancipation); previous profiting form slave-produced tobacco in North America; and candid remarks about slaves and slavery in relation to economic profit clearly suggests his complicity with, even advocacy of, slave-based economic growth. In his *Plan for Establishing a Chamber of Commerce*, for example, Colquhoun pointed to a successful episode where Liverpool merchants had used their 'combined strength' to complete a 'negotiation regarding the duty on slaves' in which 'a saving was established to the merchants' (see Colquhoun 1782: 14).

Stephen Mullen has developed the argument that a 'Glasgow-West India elite' assisted Scottish economic development 'as conduits of commerce and capital', pushing towards a wider recognition of how 'chattel slavery assisted the Industrial Revolution through successive stages in the west of Scotland' (Mullen, in Devine 2015:

233). Similarly, Anthony Cooke has fruitfully revised Devine's work on the 'Glasgow West India merchant community' between 1783-1877 (Cooke 2012).

Having established Colquhoun's professional endeavours and situated him firmly among this late-eighteenth century 'mercantile elite', we might justifiably suggest that the very history of 'Kelvingrove', and specifically Kelvingrove House, is inseparable from wider, admittedly complex, issues surrounding mercantile wealth and 'Scotland's slavery past'. It is, of course, difficult to establish the exact relationship between Colquhoun's purchase of Nether Newton and the profits he might have made from slave-produced goods (or indeed lobbying on behalf of merchants who participated in a slave-based economy). Yet given he was the man who financed the construction of the house that became Glasgow's first civic museum and coined the very name 'Kelvingrove'; these considerations and questions are of the utmost importance if we are to understand the origins and evolution of Kelvingrove, and by extension Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, with greater context and clarity.

JOHN PATTISON, KELVINGROVE HOUSE & RUNAWAY SLAVES

When Patrick Colquhoun moved to London in 1792, Kelvingrove estate fell into the hands of John Pattison, a cotton merchant who opened the Mile-End mill at Bridgeton in 1800. Surprisingly little has been written on Pattison, his business or residence at Kelvingrove. However, there is some evidence to suggest that when it came to the issue of slavery and abolition - he was on the opposite end of the debate to Colquhoun.

In 1855, an article appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* concerning new development plans for the area surrounding Kelvingrove (Park Terrace and Park Gardens among others). Though John Pattison had long sold Kelvingrove Estate – a year prior to his death in 1807 – the *Herald* article took the opportunity to print some 'interesting reminisces' (*Glasgow Herald* 1855) by Pattison's son, Matthew Moncrieff Pattison (c.1791-1859).

Describing his 'childhood home' at Kelvingrove, Moncrieff Pattison reflected on issues as wide-ranging as his father's political outlook to how he used to catch 'large quantities' of trout, pike, perch and eels 'immediately behind the mansion' (*Glasgow Herald* 1855).

Recounting another episode, he described how a 'drunken exciseman' fishing beside the house threatened to 'shoot my father on account of his

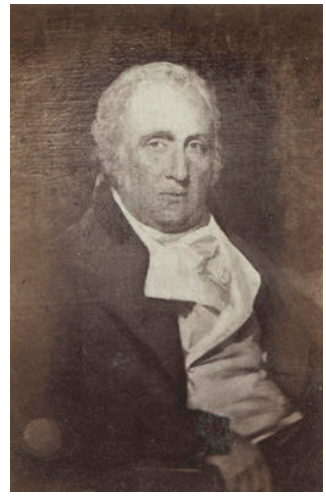

Fig 5: A Thomas Annan photograph of a portrait of John Pattison of Kelvingrove, by Sir Henry Raeburn (see Raeburn), by permission of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.

being what he termed a "Democrat"'. According to Moncrieff Pattison, his father was one of the few 'advocates of the liberal cause in Glasgow' at a time when 'political feeling ran so very high'; and qualified his statement by citing the example of when John Pattison attended 'Fox's dinner in 1796 or 1797', along with 'Sir John Maxwell of Polloc, William Maxwell, Esq. of Brediland and Maxworth, Robert Graham, Esq. of Whitehill and Professor Miller of Glasgow College' (Orme 2014: 588).

Here, Moncrieff Pattison reveals that his father was a Whig supporter of Charles James Fox (1749-1806) during the turbulent 1790s. His allusion to a 'Fox dinner' refers to the celebratory feasts, held in honour of Charles James Fox's birthday, that were 'vital in providing the Scottish Whig party with a social and organizational framework within which it could develop and expand as a party' (Orme 2014: 588). At the Glasgow 'Fox dinners', for example, central tenets of Scottish 'Whiggism' - such as 'freedom of the press', 'Catholic Emancipation' and 'the abolition of slavery' – were regularly toasted.

An early supporter of the French Revolution, Charles James Fox opposed William Pitt the Younger (1759-1806) and George III (1738-1820) when they entered a coalition against France in 1793. This led to support for Fox among several Glasgow-based individuals known for their 'liberal politics' such as John Millar (1731-1801), Regius Professor of Civil Law at Glasgow University from 1761 to 1800. That Moncrieff Pattison situates his father alongside the famously subversive Millar – 'a lifelong partisan of reform' – is telling. It also serves to remind us that Pattison bought and lived in Kelvingrove House during William Pitt's 'reign of terror' when fear of revolutionary insurrection in Scotland had hit new precedents. For additional contextual information, see Kenneth R. Johnston, *Unusual Suspects: Pitt's Reign of Alarm and the Lost Generation* (Johnstone 2013).

While the likes of Thomas Muir (1765-1799) and Thomas Fyshe Palmer (1742-1802) were famously deported during a series of sedition trials, John Pattison was also, according to a follow-up article in the *Glasgow Herald*, 'sorely persecuted' for his political beliefs. Relating two anecdotes, the anonymous writer described how on one occasion 'arrestments were sent down to the Lord Provost of Glasgow' to lay hold of Pattison and 'send him to Edinburgh Castle'; while on another, a government spy had been 'sent down to watch him!' The writer further described how Pattison took 'an active and leading part in the abolition of slavery, and thus 'rendered himself obnoxious to the West India merchants'. Most interestingly, Pattison allegedly 'protected a number of negroes who had escaped from their ships in the Clyde' and Kelvingrove was therefore 'a kind of "city of refuge" for all those runaways' (*Glasgow Herald* 1855).

While on-going projects on 'runaway slaves' in Britain may yet unearth more evidence, this anecdote remains unverifiable. Equally, however, it should not be discarded lightly and, if anything, it further reflects the undulating relationships between Kelvingrove House, slavery, abolition and colonial commerce. Curiously, John Pattison

appears to be absent from leading studies on both eighteenth-century abolition and cotton, (see Whyte 2009; Cooke 2010), despite the fact that his alleged championing of abolitionism makes for an extremely interesting complexity (since he was also a cotton-mill owner).

While the first phase of 'rapid growth' in the Scottish cotton industry was based on 'raw materials from the Caribbean' (Devine 1994: 171), the dynamics between commerce, abolition and emancipation were often conflicting. For example, though the likes of David Dale (1739-1806) and John Dennistoun (1837-1870) owned or partnered several cotton spinning factories, they were also known for their reformist benevolence and support for emancipation (see Jezierski 2011). Given that the 'freeing of slaves' contributed towards the decline of the Scottish cotton industry, these conflicts of interest merit much further investigation; with John Pattison surely being a worthy subject of enquiry and historical recovery in his own right (see Donnachie 2010).

ARCHITECTURAL AMBIGUITY: DAVID HAMILTON OR ROBERT ADAM?

In addition to politics, another interesting assertion by Moncrieff Pattison was that, around 1800, his father commissioned architect David Hamilton (1768-1843) to enlarge Kelvingrove House, adding 'a new front and two extensive wings' to the 'old house, which stands on the back of the centre of the present building' (*Glasgow Herald* 1855). This account conflicts with later suggestions that Patrick Colquhoun had employed Robert Adam to add wings and a new façade to an 'original house' that 'was probably built by Mr Wotherspoon after 1754' (*Glasgow Herald* 1899). These opposing statements raise two fundamental questions: i) Was Robert Adam was involved in the design of Kelvingrove House? and ii) Was there an existing house on the lands Colquhoun purchased in 1782?

The 'Adam argument' seems to have gathered momentum in the 1890s, when various petitions were signed and protests made against the house's impending demolition on the basis of it being a typical example of the architectural work of Robert Adam with the 'east front' being described as 'one of the most interesting and pleasing designs of the Adam style extant' (*Glasgow Herald* 1899).

This idea has persisted into the twenty-first century, with historical sources often affirming Kelvingrove House as one of the Adam buildings that 'Glasgow wantonly destroyed' (see Foreman 2002). Unfortunately, there is little trace of an architectural plan for Kelvingrove House (or even an extension to it) that verifies any architect.

There is, however, no evidence to suggest there was a house in this area prior to 1782, and a map from 1773 reveals that while Kelvinside House is marked there is little sign of any structure or dwelling close to (what would become) Kelvingrove House and estate (see Ross 'Map' 1773). It is far more likely, then, that Colquhoun built the first basic structure between 1782-3 (not involving Adam) consisting of 'only a small square building cast with plaster and whitewashed' (*Glasgow Herald* 1855); and it was Pattison who later employed David Hamilton to add the wings and front façade. While the extended sections

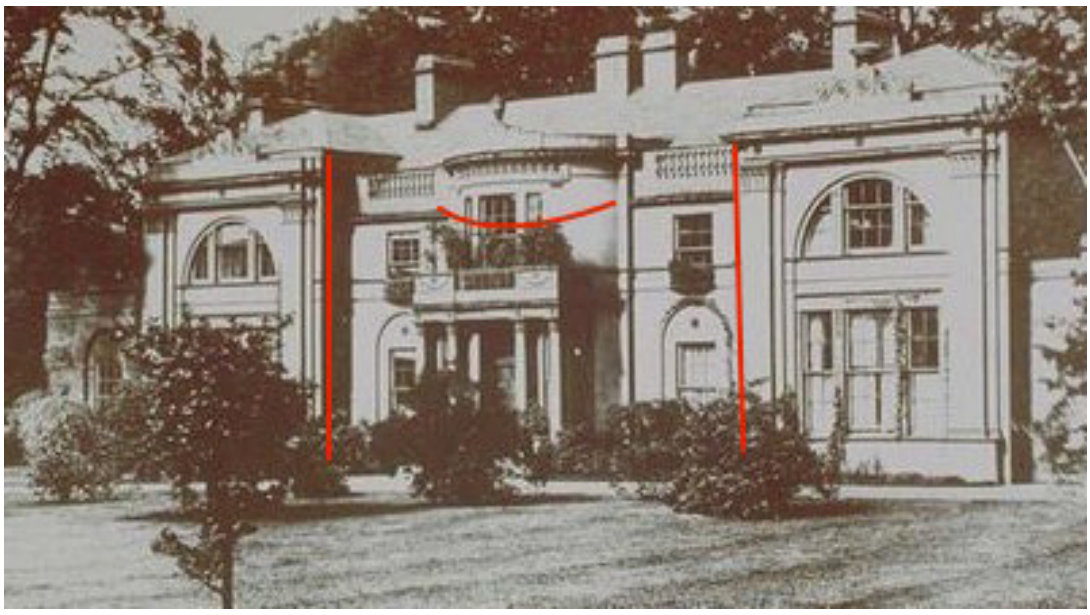

Fig 6: Image annotated by the author to show 'Adam style' features, based on photograph of print; original annotated: "Kelvingrove House, taken 1853, demolished 1900", by permission of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.

of the house admittedly resemble some aspects of the 'Adam style', it is worth remembering that 'unpublished Adam projects in Hamilton's portfolio imply some connection with the office of Robert and James Adam, possibly as clerk of works'. Consequently, his early designs, which include Hutchesons' Hospital (1802) and Glasgow's Theatre Royal (1803) 'show strong Adam influence' and were built in the same period as the (alleged) Kelvingrove House extensions (see McKean 2004).

Crucially, Hamilton was known for extending existing properties in order to bring older buildings 'in line with the latest neo-classical style' (*David Hamilton* 1995: 31 – 35). A 'sketch plan' by Hamilton showing proposed extensions to Gilmorehill House (though not executed) shows two small wings and a curved portico that are strikingly similar to the extensions described by Moncrieff Pattison. The undated sketch plan also shows Kelvingrove House; and thus it is not implausible that when sketching his new idea Hamilton referenced his older design.[1] That said, no formal architectural plan for Kelvingrove House has been recorded. One possible explanation is that Hamilton's surviving drawings were 'significantly reduced' and 'burned when it was found that there was no room for them in the office' (*Proceedings* 1895: 106).

Other portfolios, allegedly containing 'great drawings of the great Queen Street Theatre, the Royal Exchange, Hamilton Palace, churches, mansions, &c.' were said to have fallen into the hands of an 'architect of not great professional

1 This sketch plan is currently held in the Hunterian Museum collections and is due to be relocated to Kelvin Hall in the summer of 2016.

repute' who 'consigned them to an underground cellar, where they remained literally to rot' (*Proceedings* 1895: 106). If there is truth to this account, given by architect Thomas Gildard (1822-1895), then it is possible that the extension plans to Kelvingrove House were among these 'lost' Hamilton drawings.

Finally, if Robert Adam had designed or extended a house at Kelvingrove, it is curious that no record or architectural plan has been recorded given most of his designs from the period have been extensively collected and catalogued, with most of his drawings remaining in the Sir John Soane Museum (see also King 2011). More speculatively, the overall amount of variety and detail of the 'wings' and façade is something that might be expected from much later Adam buildings, and it is hard to imagine anyone working in his broad style would be that far advanced as early as 1782. David King, author of *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam*, has further speculated that the house also seems to lack Adam's refinement in that its pavilions have 'rather thin friezes' and lack signature 'string courses' (King 2016).

While conclusive proof remains to be found, the balance of evidence suggests that Robert Adam was never involved in the construction and design of Kelvingrove House. Rather, the 'Adam style' features (see Fig 6) appear to have been designed by David Hamilton, under the commission of John Pattison, sometime between 1800 and 1801. Most notably, Adam was not associated with the house until the late 1890s, when the likes of Peter Macgregor Chalmers, the Glasgow Art Club and members of the 'Regality Club' campaigned against the impending demolition of the house. Perhaps, then, citing the illustrious name of Adam was deemed the best powder for the cause of opposing its removal; despite the fact that no proof or connection with Adam was – or ever has been – traced. Incidentally, a similar episode occurred during the proposed demolition of David Dale's Charlotte Street House. Despite no formal evidence, claims were made on the basis of it being 'built to the design of Robert Adam' (*Glasgow Herald* 1953).

RICHARD DENNISTOUN AND THE WEST INDIA ELITE

Further complicating the relationship between Kelvingrove House and mercantile wealth, Glasgow merchant Richard Dennistoun (c.1758-1833) purchased the estate from John Pattison in 1806. While Patrick Colquhoun had probable links with Glasgow's West India 'elite', Dennistoun was directly involved in West Indies trade; holding shares in Dennistoun, Buchanan and Co.', the 'Sugar House Company' in Port Glasgow and cotton spinners at Stanley, Perthshire (Cooke 2012: 157).

Descended from the illustrious 'Dennistouns of Colgrain', Richard Dennistoun's two brothers, Robert Dennistoun (1772-1815) and James Dennistoun (1758-1835), were also prominent traders as outlined in Anthony Cooke's recent profiling of 'elite' Glasgow West India merchants between 1783 and 1877 (see *Some Account* 1859).

Expanding on T.M. Devine's pioneering work (Devine 1978: 40 – 67), Cooke identified a total of sixty-four people who formed part of

the Glasgow West India merchant community by using, in addition to Devine's original findings, wills, probate inventories, marriage connections and slave compensation records recently collated by a team at University College London (*Legacies of British*). Cooke's exploration into marriage is particularly insightful given it was often a way of 'reinforcing business networks' and 'cementing 'one's role in a business partnership' (Cooke 2012: 132). Accordingly, Richard Dennistoun married Christian Alston whose brothers Robert Douglas (1778-1846) and George Alston (c.1775-1850) were also prominent West India merchants. A testament to the contemporary intertwining of marriage with business interests, the Alston brothers held shares in in 'Campbell, Rivers & Co.' along with Richard Dennistoun.

Thus, when Richard Dennistoun and his wife moved into Kelvingrove House in 1806, there can be little doubt they were also firmly situated among an 'elite' circle of Glasgow West India merchant families. As with the above discussion of the cotton industry, however, it is important to heed some of the complexities existing between business and politics. For example, while James Dennistoun (Richard's brother) was a West Indian merchant, he was also a pro-reform Whig who campaigned for the Reform Act of 1832, which ushered in a long period of Liberal dominance in Glasgow. During this period, the 'city's representatives in parliament were likely to be pro-emancipation and hostile to the retention of slavery in the West Indian colonies', which would have surely conflicted with the Dennistouns' business interests (see 'Campbell, Rivers & Co.).

As evidenced above, however, there is little doubt that Richard Dennistoun's wealth was bolstered by commercial enterprises that relied on West Indian slavery. Dennistoun was also one of five named awardees in an 1836 compensation claim for the loss of fifty enslaved in a Trinidad Plantation (see Trinidad 1749 'Belvedere'). Though the payout occurred after his death in 1833, it is worth remembering that Kelvingrove House remained in the Dennistoun family until 1841, and therefore this accumulation of slavery-related wealth (or compensation) is no less significant. While Dennistoun's wealth cannot be tied to the actual construction of the mansion and estate (unlike the case of Patrick Colquhoun), other important issues must still be considered. For example, Stephen Mullen's exploration of material culture in prominent Glasgow merchants' mansions sheds further light on how the proceeds from slavery affected, indeed shaped, living conditions among Glasgow's West Indian 'elite', pointing further to how an informed, contextual history of Kelvingrove must account for a multifarious array of connections with colonial trade and slavery. With regards to Kelvingrove House, Mullen has also undertaken a room-by-room case study during the period in which Richard Dennistoun inhabited it.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: KELVINGROVE HOUSE, GLASGOW & SLAVERY

The primary purpose of this study has been to provide more information on the early history, owners and residents of Kelvingrove House, before it was converted into the City Industrial Museum in 1870. As stated in the introduction,

it is also hoped that the historical recovery of the long-demolished house might also contribute to much wider discussions regarding how Glasgow's present-day civic institutions might approach the representation of the city's historical links with slavery. One avenue that remains to be explored is the provenance of 'slavery-related' objects that occupied the original Kelvingrove House/ City Industrial Museum. Tracing accession registers, museum diaries, departmental records and the annual *Report on the City Industrial Museum* (published from 1876 onwards) would provide a starting point for gathering this kind of information. However, given this article has focused on the earlier history of Kelvingrove House, it is more appropriate here to discuss why acknowledging the pre-museum era is also important.

Of course, part of the difficulty with Kelvingrove House is that, unlike the Gallery of Modern Art, there is no physical remnant that can visually intertwine slavery into a present historical narrative. While one can point to the GoMA building in the 'Merchant City' and discuss eighteenth-century tobacco lords, or how William Cunninghame financed the building with slave-generated revenue; the present-day Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum stands as a symbol of untainted Victorian splendour which, perhaps, obscures the earlier history of the original mansion and estate.

Needless to say, publicly acknowledging that Kelvingrove House (and by extension Glasgow's first civic museum) was also partly financed by slave-generated revenue is by no means a straightforward endeavour. Though presenting stories about Patrick Colquhoun, Richard Dennistoun and even John Pattison provides a natural focal point, such an approach would adhere to the much-criticised 'dominant narrative' of focusing on localised merchants and elite figures rather than highlighting the centrality of slavery to our shared transatlantic histories (see McVey 2015: 793-97).

Yet, given the plethora of theoretical texts, public initiatives and articles on 'slavery in the museum' that have appeared since the 2007 bicentenary of the Abolition Act, there is certainly no shortage of materials to aid direction and catalyse constructive debate on the matter.

The case of Kelvingrove House is, of course, but a small part of a much wider obligation to increase public awareness of Glasgow's links with slavery. The task that academics, curators and institutional representatives in Glasgow must collectively embrace, then, is to continue these discussions and propel them forwards into action.

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Mr Haldane's Hermitage: Re-discovering a Late 18th Century Immersive Poetry Tableau at Airthrey Estate, Bridge of Allan, Stirling, a Case of Disguising East India Company Profits

Murray Cook and Jennifer Strachan

INTRODUCTION

To the immediate north of Stirling's University's campus lies a post-glacial sea cliff made of volcaniclastic conglomerate. This cliff face is crossed by a network of graded paths that link two structures: The Summerhouse and The Hermitage. These buildings are typical of late 18th century designed landscapes (Buxbaum 1989) and provided places for the owners to visit on a walk of their grounds as well as a variety of other purposes including shelter, monuments to look to and from and an opportunity for a theatrical reveal, to entertain and surprise guests. They are a form of conspicuous consumption whereby the elite demonstrated their good taste to the neighbours and visitors.

Airthrey Castle and Estate were built and developed by the Haldane family with wealth derived from the East India Company (Haldane 1853; HES GDL00010; Mair 2018: 142-3). Robert Haldane commissioned the bulk of the design and structural work including The Hermitage in a very short period from 1786 when he moved to the estate at 22 and 1798 when he sold it to pursue a career as a Christian evangelist. The designed landscape and policies of Airthrey Castle are considered Nationally Significant and designated by Historic Environment Scotland (HES GDL00010). However, prior to the authors' interest neither The Hermitage nor The Summerhouse have been formally described (Cook et al 2024). This article solely concerns The Hermitage.

The ruins of The Hermitage are a well known drinking spot for young people from Bridge of Allan and in recent years the structure has become ever harder to access and comprehend due to litter, tree growth, structural collapse and fallen branches. In Autumn 2023 in collaboration with Stirling University's then Artist in Residence Audrey Grant and local volunteers the authors undertook a programme of vegetation clearance and litter pick up. In turn this allowed a basic photographic record of the structure to be compiled which in turn informed an understanding of its design and history. This article provides the first detailed description of the building and discusses its function and significance.

HISTORY OF THE HERMITAGE

Despite being part of a Nationally Significant Designed Landscape there is no formal record of the structure. It is described by the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments (RCAHMS) (Canmore ID 47157; NS 80771 97001) as '*a grotto. Built about 1785. Now in ruins.*' This description is an edited version of the 1860 Name Book entry which in full reads '*A grotto constructed about the year 1785 by the late Robert Haldane, at the time proprietor of Aithrey. It is situated near the top of one of the many precipices that stud the southern base of the Ochils. It is approached by well kept promenades and the within its limits there is a flight of steps cut out of the rock and leading up to a seat from which a commanding view of the country is obtained. It is in a ruinous state.*' The RCAHMS thesaurus defines a grotto as '*an artificial cave or cell, often decorated with stalactites and shells. Most were constructed as garden features in the grounds of large 18th century houses.*'

Historic Environment Scotland's entry in their *Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* (Airthrey Castle GDL00010) notes the presence of The Hermitage but does not describe it in any detail: '*The Hermitage is roofless although the walls remain*' and potentially this may even describe the Summer House. The Airthrey Hermitage has also tended to be overlooked by studies of garden buildings in designed landscapes and is not mentioned by Tait (1980), Buxbaum (1989) or Campbell (2013). While Cooper (2000: 299) mentions a 'tower' at Aithrey Castle, it is not clear if this means an element of the actual castle or a structure in the landscape which of course could be either The Summerhouse or The Hermitage. Regardless, while the building has been overlooked in the past it is clear that it forms a key part of a Nationally Significant Designed Landscape and so should be itself considered Nationally Significant.

Before examining the history of The Hermitage it is worth expanding on terminology. The RCAHMS have described it as a 'grotto' while Haldane called it a hermitage. Dr Christopher Dingwall (pers comm) suggests that while hermitages are normally viewed as places of retreat and seclusion he considers the Airthrey Hermitage to be more of a view-house or belvedere designed with extensive views in mind. Campbell (2013:97) notes that 18th century garden building design, function and terminology were not exact sciences and clients and architects were constantly being influenced by each other in what was explicitly elite social competition via conspicuous consumption.

The Hermitage is first recorded as in ruins on the 1861 1st of the Ordnance Survey (Stirlingshire Sheet X) though not in any detail and shows a single small oblong structure. The 2nd Edition (Stirlingshire Sheet x.12) surveyed in 1862 show three structures and notes that they are in ruins (Figure 1). This map also shows stairs and an oblong structure to their south. The 1896 revision (Stirlingshire Sheet X.12) shows a third building (Figure 1), no longer notes that the structure is in ruins and does not record the stairs. None of the maps show the gate/doorway structure. The structure is no longer named or recorded by 1948 (Stirlingshire Sheet NX1).

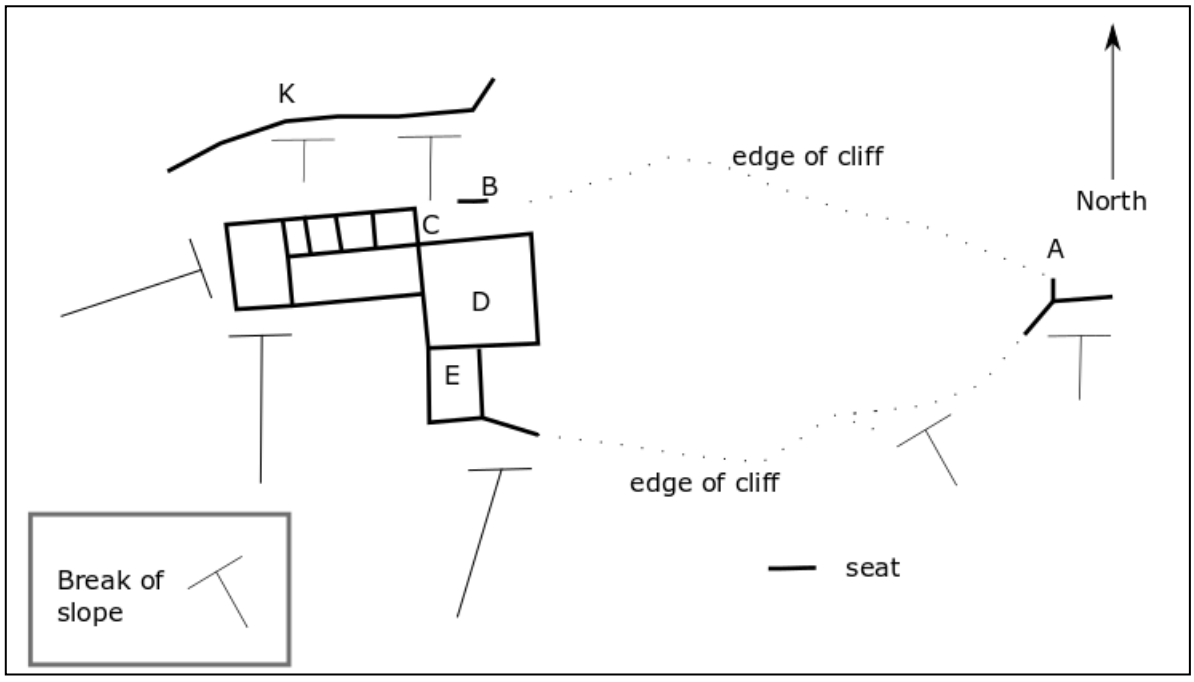

Figure 1: Plan of The Hermitage

Captain Robert Haldane, an East India Company ship Captain and later Stirling's MP acquired Airthrey in 1759. On his death it was passed to his nephew, James Haldane another Captain in the East India Company. On his death in 1768 the four year old Robert Haldane inherited the estate. Robert Haldane's brother Alexander would also become an East India Captain. It is worth noting that the wealth clawed from India in the late 18th century created a new class of person: Nabobs. These people were often fabulously rich and if they returned home often built brand new estates with their money (Buddle 1999:55). Sir Walter Scott described India as '*the corn chest of Scotland, where we poor gentry must send our younger sons as we send our black cattle to the south*' (ibid) and of course one of Becky Shaw's targets in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* Jos Sedley was a Nabob and is clearly portrayed as a fat buffoon. Andrew MacKillop in his recent review of Scotland in the Eastern portions of the British Empire notes that (2021: 241-22) the Eastern Empire (ie the areas that Nabobs derived their profits) was '*cloaked in a reputation of corrupt conquest and unsustainable profiteering derived from plunder and asset stripping or questionable practices*'. Newly returned merchants made strenuous efforts to disguise these profits as '*a means of countering and negating the negative connotations associated with the Eastern Empire*' MacKillop gives the Haldanes of Airthrey as a key example of this process.

Robert Haldane grew up a wealthy man and embarked on a series of careers initially enrolling at University to study divinity, then joining the military, then back to University, then off

on a grand tour of Europe before returning to Airthrey at 22 to transform the estate including the construction of The Hermitage. However, contrary to the entry in the Name Book Haldane cannot have built The Hermitage in 1785 as he only moved to the estate in September 1786 and his first daughter was born in 1787, which will surely have distracted him (Haldane 1853; Mair 2018: 142-3). Haldane commissioned Robert Adam to design his house in 1790/91 (HES Airthrey Castle GDL00010) and it seems probable that The Hermitage was one of the last projects to be completed once the shape of the estate and thus views of it were established.

Craig Mair's (2108, 143-4) history of Bridge of Allan, records some local traditions: that the structure was inspired by Oliver Goldsmith's 1766 poem *The Hermit* (also known as '*Edwin and Angelina*' from Chapter 8 of Goldsmith's novel the *Vicar of Wakefield* where it is described as '*ballad*') and that a local man had been employed to live in the structure but had got drunk in Bridge of Allan so was fired. It should be noted that the Goldsmith poem contains no architectural description and can only have been the loosest of inspirations. However, the origins of both stories are found within a memoir written by Robert Haldane's brother Alexander which states the following: *Amongst the erections in the woods of Airthrey, there was one which excited considerable interest, and existed for many years after Mr. Haldane left the place, but which has long ago tumbled into ruins. It was an hermitage, constructed after the model of the woodland retreat to which Goldsmith's Angelina is led by the "taper's hospitable ray," and discovers her slighted lover, who had sought for consolation in a hermit's life away from the haunts of men. "The wicket opening with a latch," "the rushy couch," "the scrip with herbs and fruits supplied," all the other sylvan articles of furniture described by the poet, were there, whilst on the sides of the adjacent rock, or within the hut itself, the lines of Goldsmith were painted at proper intervals, — the invitation to " the houseless child of want to accept the guiltless feast, and the blessing and repose," concluding at last with the sentimental moral, —*

> *" Then, pilgrim, turn, thy cares forego, —*
> *All earth-born cares are wrong, —*
> *Man wants but little here below,*
> *Nor wants that little long."*

The Vicar of Wakefield was Goldsmith's only novel and his biggest success (Golden 1977) and appears to have been very popular in the late 18th century which presumably explains Haldane's interest. With regard to the hermit, his brother writes the following: '*Mr. Haldane, who in his younger days always delighted in a practical joke, advertised for a real hermit, specifying the conditions, which were to be in accordance with the beau-ideal of Goldsmith's, including the prohibition of animal food. But the restrictions did not prevent the author of the jest from being obliged to deal seriously with applications for the place, and one man, in particular, professed himself ready to comply with all the conditions except one, which was that he should never leave the wood. To the doom of perpetual seclusion the would-be hermit could not make up his mind to submit, and the advertisement was not repeated*' (Haldane 1853: 48-9).

Figure 2: The Hermitage from the west showing Element E, the final phase tower.

In perhaps another attempt to expiate the taint of the East India Company Robert Haldane sold the estate in 1798 (HES Airthrey Castle GDL00010, give this date as 1796) to pursue a career as a Christian missionary and philanthropist (Mair 2018:144) and there are no indications that the new buyer showed any interest in The Hermitage. Mair (2018:143) quotes an account written in 1888 by a local man Bryce, who describes The Hermitage as already in neglect by 1800 and comprising a staircase with a pebble dash finish. This formed the entrance to a room with a window of coloured glass the fragments of which were a focus for local boys' collecting.

THE HERMITAGE TODAY

This description summarises a fuller unpublished account (Cook et al 2024). The paths to the immediate east and west of The Hermitage are narrow and wrap round the immediate base of the rock face on an artificial graded path. As the structure appears the view is dominated by a ruinous rounded tower (Element D, Figures 1 and 2). As will be argued below it is proposed that D is not part of the original design but a later 19th century addition. This suggests that The Hermitage was designed to be not as prominent in its immediate environs as it currently is. The path from the east is dominated by yew and laurel which are likely to have been deliberately

Figure 3: The view from The Hermitage looking south.

planted. To the exterior on the path around the base of The Hermitage is a bedrock shelf which forms a natural bench and which may show some indications of the bedrock having been smoothed. The views south from all parts of the complex present a panorama of the estate framed by the Abbey Craig and Stirling Castle (Figure 3).

Access into The Hermitage is from the east along a revetted path through a doorway/arch (Element A; Figures 1 and 4) which has clear indications of having had a timber door within it. The doorway is made of brick and stone and its external faces are covered with a pebble dash which mimics the natural bedrock. To the interior a wall (slopes evenly down to the ground, giving the appearance of a collapsed structure, this too has the pebble dash render on it. The bulk of the structures associated with The Hermitage cannot be seen until one is through the doorway and walked round the corner.

There is a clear gently rising path to the immediate south of the cliff face, but beyond this the ground slopes down and it is not clear if it was ever usable. The path was built by a combination of cutting into the bedrock in places and building it up in others. The path runs to a staircase (Element C) with seven built steps and a possible rock cut eighth which is built within a natural but augmented fissure in the bedrock (Figures 1 and 5). The first and last steps of the staircase are at least triple the tread of the others and built on levelled bedrock and it seems probable that there was a now destroyed wooden element. To the south and left of the staircase there is a double skinned brick wall with a stepped upper edge and the same pebble dash render. The base of the

Figure 4: The doorway (Element A) from the east.

Figure 5: The staircase (Element C) from the east.

outer wall is covered with the render but as the steps rise so the double skinned wall is revealed. Significantly, it is clear that the intended affect of the render was not to fool anyone into thinking this was a genuine rock cut structure but rather to allow a knowing nod to its skilful artifice. To the right of the staircase as one ascends there are traces of drilled and worked holes and an iron band which are assumed to present a hand rail. At the top of the stairs is a rock cut platform that straddles the stairs. Above this is a stretch of masonry revetment which raises the possibility of a missing element connecting the two.

Immediately to the east of the staircase at its base was a hearth feature (Element B; Figures 1 and 6), this was associated with a brick chimney but had been constructed in a natural fissure and covered in the same pebble dash render. The top of the chimney appeared to have been originally capped with stonework which when smoke vented would have given the impression of it coming from the cliff face. The hearth itself has no fireplace or surround and presumably was intended to look like an irregular natural void. There are no indications of any structure enclosing the hearth and it does not appear to have been designed to warm a room.

To the left and thus south of the staircase was a possible cupboard. The function of this feature is unclear but it appears to have been originally bigger and to have been subsequently truncated. To the east of the cupboard was an oblong

Figure 6: The fireplace (Element B) from the south.

Figure 7: Element E from above and north.

building (Element D; Figures 1, 2 and 7) with walls up to 2m high on the interior but 3m on the exterior and measuring c 3m by 3m. The northern element to this structure comprised cut bedrock. There was no obvious access to this structure and it may have required steps down into it from the rock cut platform which runs to the staircase. The interior is occupied by a substantial mature tree. It seems possible that this structure was originally roofed and may be what was recorded on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey. The cupboard feature may have represented an upper floor to a now no longer extant building accessed from the rock cut platform. There was also no indication of the pebble render on any of the external surfaces.

The southern wall of D has been broken through to provide access to the rounded tower (Element E; Figures 1 and 7) which had not been keyed into D and there is a clear line between the two. Within the interior of the rounded tower were four small square holes that appear to be supports timber floor joists these were at roughly the same level as the hole through D. Assuming a timber floor the walls of the tower would be a chest height. The top of the wall of E appears to have been deliberately left uneven. The aim of E's construction appears to have been to create a viewing platform.

INTERPRETATION

Haldane's Hermitage is revealed to be a complex series of structures with at least two phases. It also

seems likely that the original design was partially hidden within the rock face and that it was intended to look like a natural rock grotto that had been augmented within which was a hermitage which was intended as a '*woodland retreat*' within a rocky setting (Haldane 1843:48). There were likely several points from both immediately outside and within The Hermitage from which to view the impressive vista to the south centred on Aithrey loch framed by the Abbey Craig and Stirling Castle. It seems probable that D represented some form of roofed structure and that there may have been another roofed structure at the top of the stairs (C) or even that the stairs led to a higher level. Presumably one of these was the '*hut*' described by Alexander Haldane (ibid). The staircase was not roofed and is likely missing some wooden elements as the treads of the steps at the top and bottom are too big. It was also likely supported by a bannister to the north. The two late 19th century accounts mentioned earlier appear to contradict each other: the 1860 Name Book discuss a seat at the top of the stairs while the 1888 Bryce account describes a room with coloured glass at the top. Both accounts were written decades after Haldane sold the estate and at present there is no way to conclude which is correct or indeed if they both are: a seat within a roof. The chimney and hearth (B) appear to have no other function than to project smoke apparently from the 'natural' rock face perhaps to evoke a volcanic fissure.

Haldane (ibid) notes that the surface of the rock face and the interior of the hut were painted with lines of Goldsmith's poem. It is not clear if the entire poem was rendered or just key scenes but the latter seems more likely. We may imagine that these could have started outside the entrance and led to the '*hut*' and presumably a tableau including '*the other sylvan articles of furniture described by the poet*' representing the culmination of the poem in an immersive experience. In this context the hearth (B) may have been another prop in the experience echoing the hermit's hearth where '*the crackling faggot flies*'. The 'hut' (presumably D) could also have served as a covered viewing platform for the views to the south as well as some form of tea room or banqueting room. There are no surviving indications of what this structure looked like or the '*sylvan.. furniture*' and it appears that the structure was neglected and a focus of vandalism almost as soon as Haldane sold estate in 1798 (or 1796). This decline may have been aided by changing fashions and Campbell (2013: 53) notes that interest in hermitages was declining by 1780. The first phase of the Airthrey Hermitage appears to have lasted less than 10 years and perhaps no more than 5 years. To be explicit there are no indications that Haldane was consciously attempting to disguise his inherited money but it seems likely. But even if he were not it is clear that this was a rather expensive whimsical joke.

The later tower structure (E) with its flag pole made the whole complex more visible within its environs and required the demolition of the southern wall of D which implies that any putative roof had already gone. It may be that E was constructed from the rubble of D. It is argued that the absence of element E on the 1861 revision of the Ordnance Survey and its presence on the

1896 revision suggests it was built after 1861. The unfinished nature of the top of the wall of E may have been deliberate to provide the impression of an older ruin. It may be that this was undertaken to open views to the newly constructed National Wallace Monument on the Abbey Craig opened in 1869. There are at present no known accounts of the appearance or use of this second phase of The Hermitage.

CONCLUSION

The Hermitage appears to have been a short lived fashionable whimsy, perhaps even an elaborate joke by a man with time and money on his hands, keen to make an impression on local society. However, the structure presumably served multiple functions including as a belvedere. Perhaps the dressing/repurposing of the structure as Goldsmith's Hermitage was the joke. It is also possible that this was an attempt to disguise the ultimate source of his wealth: the East India Company and all its associated negative connotations. That the structure was not maintained after the whole estate was sold when Haldane finally found his vocation perhaps underlines its superficial and whimsical nature as well as the incredible wealth available to the elite of the time. The production of a first formal record underlines the significance of the building and its place in the history of Scottish landscape design.

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The White Heather Club Reassessed

Pat Ballantyne

INTRODUCTION

The *White Heather Club* was a popular Scottish light entertainment television programme that was broadcast between 1958 and 1967. Featuring Scottish dance and dance music, folk songs, comic songs and bothy ballads, the *White Heather Club* had an anchor or host who provided the links between the acts and sang a song or two. The programme is particularly remembered by the older Scottish population for its popular annual *Hogmanay* shows.

In subsequent decades, Scots have often dismissed the *White Heather Club*, together with tartan and shortbread, as being aspects of Scottish culture that they love to hate. One commentator suggested that the programme communicated a 'dated' and 'tartanised view of Scotland'.[1] It is more than time to reassess the position of the *White Heather Club* in Scottish culture as it was a technically and culturally creative approach to home entertainment on the small screen. The programme reflected many innovations in television broadcasting and has had a long-lasting influence.

In this article, I will consider the context which led to the commissioning of the *White Heather Club*, the innovative format of the programme, the experiences of performers and the legacy of the *White Heather Club*. I make particular use of archive material and interviews with former *White Heather Club* performers.[2]

TELEVISION BROADCASTING IN 1950S SCOTLAND

A combination of factors led to three Scottish-themed light entertainment television programmes being commissioned between 1956 and 1958, one of which was the *White Heather Club*. Although the BBC continued to pour resources into radio programming in the immediate post-war period, television broadcasting slowly began to expand. (Potter 2022: 132). The 1951 Beveridge Report on Broadcasting recommended that Scotland should have control over its own television broadcast output, although the BBC in London decided not to devolve the finances to Scotland. (Sweeney 2008: 94).

As the 1950s progressed, an increasing number of people were able to access television reception and as a result, more television licences were purchased. Between 1955 and 1960, the number of licences in Scotland doubled. (Potter 138; 143). STV (Scottish Television), the first Scottish commercial television station, began broadcasting in 1957 (Potter 146). This meant that the BBC would have to compete with STV for viewers. Around this time, the BBC offered its radio producers the opportunity to take a television production course to encourage them

to make the move from radio to television and to develop more Scottish-themed television programming. (Stewart 2025 d). As 20 percent of the Scottish radio audience regularly tuned in to Scottish dance music programmes in the 1950s, it is hardly surprising that during the middle of the decade, no less than three Scottish-themed television programmes were commissioned.[3] These were the BBC's *The Kilt is My Delight* (1956–1963), STV's informal alternative *Jig Time* (1958–1962) and the *White Heather Club* (1958-1967), a second Scottish-themed light entertainment programme from the BBC.

THREE SCOTTISH LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

The Kilt is My Delight (1956–1963) was transmitted nationally, meaning it could be viewed in both Scotland and England (Stewart 2025 a). It featured singers, Scottish dance bands, pipers and Highland and Scottish country dancers. The dancers often wore formal Scottish country dance costumes: the women had long white gowns and the men, kilt and sporran outfits. Some of *The Kilt is My Delight's* regular performers, including accordionist Jimmy Shand, his dance band and the Highland dancer Bobby Watson, took part in the *White Heather Club* when it began broadcasting two years later. Until 17 October 1961, when the *White Heather Club* became a nationally transmitted programme, *The Kilt is My Delight* was the only Scottish light entertainment programme that was regularly broadcast on the national BBC-tv network. (Stewart 2025 a).

The rival STV production, *Jig Time* (1958–1962) also featured Scottish music, song and dance. To emphasise its informality, *Jig Time's* studio set resembled a barn interior. The show's dance director Bruce McClure (1925–1989) approached the Scottish School of Physical Education to recruit students as dancers, assuming that they would have studied gymnastics, which they had not (Ballantyne 2019). Physical Education student John Ward and some of the other students who joined *Jig Time* as dancers, also performed on *White Heather Club* programmes.

Like *Jig Time*, the *White Heather Club* (1958–1968) was informal and light-hearted. Its former Floor Manager, Lea Ashton said that the series had developed from the *White Heather Club New Year Party* (*Reunion* 21:50*)* that Iain MacFadyen (1926–1983) had produced for Hogmanay 1957/58, after taking the television production course designed to help radio producers make the switch to television production. Under the pseudonym Neil Grant, MacFadyen composed and arranged Scottish songs and dance music, which proved useful for the *White Heather Club* series. The popular Scottish singer, Robert Wilson was the programme's first host. According to the entertainer Andy Stewart, it was the name of Wilson's own touring variety show, the *White Heather Group* that provided the inspiration for the name of the new television series – the *White Heather Club* (*Reunion* 23:41*)*.

In 1958, when the *White Heather Club* started, Scottish folk songs and ballads were just as popular with Scottish audiences as Scottish dance

music was. Folk clubs had begun to appear, the first of which was Edinburgh University's 'Folk Society' in 1958 (Bruce 2022: 35). Glasgow had the 'Blues and Ballads Club' at Allan Glen's School and the 'Ballads Club', which started in 1957 at Rutherglen Academy (Bruce 2022: 182,183). Many of the songs and ballads sung at these clubs, gathered and published in the *Little Red Book* (1962), were performed on the *White Heather Club*. This brought them to an even wider public.

The *White Heather Club* was filmed and broadcast from the BBC's new studio premises at Springfield Road in Glasgow which had previously been the Black Cat Cinema (Stewart 2024). The programme featured Scottish folksongs, bothy ballads and humorous songs and poems, Scottish dance and dance music, and new songs and comedy scripts that were created specifically for the programme. It was so popular that by the summer of 1961, more than a third of the Scottish population was watching the *White Heather Club* every week.[4] As a result, it was moved to a national broadcast slot in October 1961. At its peak, the show was able to attract an audience of 10 million viewers.[5]

THE *WHITE HEATHER CLUB* PROGRAMMES

The Aberdonian dancer and teacher Bobby Watson (1914–1997) was both a solo dancer and a dance director on the show at various times between 1959 and 1965. During this period he also appeared on *The Kilt is My Delight*, the *Andy Stewart Show* and toured with the *White Heather* stage shows in Scotland, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. As a champion Highland dancer and respected Scottish country dance teacher, Watson was well-known and had performed and taught in Scotland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the USA. He kept a significant amount of material that related to his dancing and his dance teaching practice and performance, including rehearsal scripts from the *White Heather Club* programmes that he had either participated in or acted as dance director on. Now held at the University of Aberdeen, the scripts contain useful information about each programme, such as the times and locations of rehearsals, the names of the performers and production crew and detailed lists of the contents of each show, including song and dance titles and the programme's running order. The scripts also document how filming the programme changed over time. The associated camera scripts provide an extra dimension by recording exactly how the cameras would film each act. It was particularly important during performances for the dancers to know where each camera would be at any time and where they would move to next, in order to avoid accidental collisions in the often limited studio space. (Ballantyne 2019)

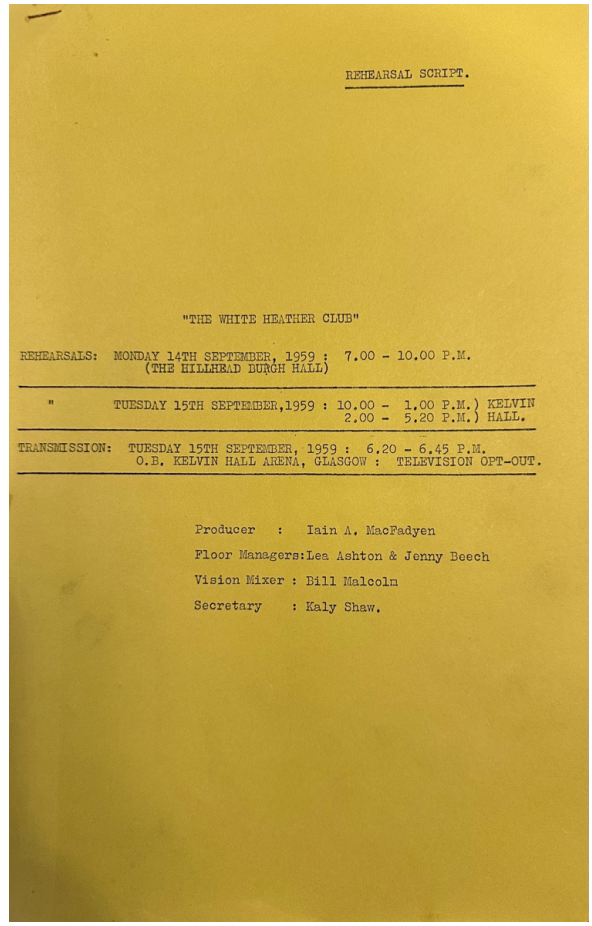
THE DANCERS

The dancers were an indispensable part of the programme. There were sixteen dancers on each show, eight female and eight male. The women were all professional dancers and able to learn new dances quickly so did not need to have any prior experience of Scottish country dancing. The men either had been, or were students at the

Scottish School of Physical Training at Jordanhill College of Education, Glasgow and often had no previous dance experience (Ballantyne 2019). Between 1958 and 1964 three dance directors worked at various times on the *White Heather Club*: Bobby Watson, Dixie Ingram and Jack Cooper (Ballantyne 2019). The dance director identified, choreographed and arranged suitable Scottish country dances and Highland dances for each week's show.

Bobby Watson was the dance director on 40 programmes between September 1959 and December 1960. He did not take part in the television show again until August 1964 when he appeared as a guest artiste but he did participate in the *White Heather Show's* five-month long tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1963. He had a further period as the *White Heather Club's* dance director between April and June 1965. His final involvement with the television show was in September of 1965. With the Deeside Dancers, he took part in the *White Heather Club Stage Show* at the Edinburgh Palladium in the summer of 1967.

Bobby Watson first appeared on the *White Heather Club* as both performer and dance director on 15 September 1959. This episode was broadcast from the Scottish Industries Exhibition at Glasgow's Kelvin Hall and was preceded by three rehearsals which took place on the day before and on the day itself. The show was transmitted live at 6.20 pm from the Kelvin Hall Arena, which must have been a technically challenging enterprise, particularly for the performers in those early days of Scottish broadcasting. Hosted by Andy Stewart, there were performances by the Aberdonian singer Laura Brand, the City of Glasgow Police Choir, the Joe Gordon Folk Four, Bobby Watson, the White Heather Dancers, Jimmy Shand and his



REHEARSAL SCRIPT.

"THE WHITE HEATHER CLUB"

REHEARSALS: MONDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER, 1959 : 7.00 - 10.00 P.M.
(THE HILLHEAD BURGH HALL)

" TUESDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER,1959 : 10.00 - 1.00 P.M.) KELVIN
2.00 - 5.20 P.M.) HALL.

TRANSMISSION: TUESDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1959 : 6.20 - 6.45 P.M.
O.B. KELVIN HALL ARENA, GLASGOW : TELEVISION OPT-OUT.

Producer : Iain A. MacFadyen
Floor Managers:Lea Ashton & Jenny Beech
Vision Mixer : Bill Malcolm
Secretary : Kaly Shaw.

FIGURE 1
Rehearsal script cover page, 14 September 1959. With permission, University of Aberdeen Special Collections

Band and Harry Carmichael, who at that time was the show's resident pianist.

Stewart introduced the show by describing the exhibition as a 'king-sized sale of work'.[6] The

mood set by his humorous introduction continued throughout the programme and all the links were light-hearted. The Joe Gordon Folk Four sang the bothy ballad *Drumdelgie* and Stewart recited a comic poem, told a short story and gave one of his earliest performances of *Donald, Where's Your Troosers*, with his own lyrics and with music by the show's producer and deviser, Iain MacFadyen. *Donald Where's Your Troosers* is still popular today. Stewart explained on the 1991 *White Heather Club Reunion* programme that although he had trained as an actor and not as a singer, he discovered that he had a talent for writing song lyrics. 'I would always write the lyric first. Iain [MacFadyen] would take the lyric home and almost inevitably, would produce a tune the next day' (*Reunion* 29:45). *Donald Where's Your Troosers* was not the only popular song to be created in this way. The following year, *A Scottish Soldier* and *The Battle's O'er* also became much requested hits from the series. Stewart said that there was an 'absolute sensation when I sang the *Scottish Soldier* on television. We had an absolute flood of mail asking us to do it the very next week and it was the breakthrough for me' (*Reunion* 28:13).

The *White Heather Club* was to return to the Scottish Industries Exhibition in September 1964 with changes from the original programme of 1959. The 1964 script covered two programmes that were to be recorded back-to-back in a 45-minute slot. The popular folk singing duo, Robin Hall and Jimmie Macgregor, were the hosts, having replaced Andy Stewart in 1963. The artistes were singers Moira Anderson and James Urquhart, dancer Bobby Watson and pianist Harry Carmichael. The dance music was provided by Jim MacLeod and his band and Jack Cooper directed the dances. By 1965, the final year of Watson's involvement with the show, the format had altered further. By this time there was usually only one singing guest as the hosts Hall and Macgregor tended to perform most of the well-known folk songs themselves. The dance component remained the same as it always had been, with four dances per show.

JOHN AND ELEANOR WARD

I interviewed former *White Heather Club* dancers, John and Eleanor Ward in September 2019. They met on the programme in 1960. John Ward, who was a Physical Education student joined the *White Heather Club* dancers in 1959 and performed regularly until the pressure on his time through his work as a teacher made his appearances less frequent. His last appearance was in 1964. Eleanor Cairns was a professional dancer who joined in 1960 and left some time after she and John married in 1963. Around 1960, when she was 18, Eleanor had auditioned for the *White Heather Summer Show* at the Glasgow Empire Theatre, which ran for three months every year. This was the first time she had performed set dances on stage, which she described as being a mixture of Scottish country dances and choreographed patterns. Two of her friends, who also danced in the show, asked her to come and watch a rehearsal of the *White Heather Club* television programme at the Springfield Road studios. She joined the television show as a dancer shortly after.

John's dance experience was somewhat different to Eleanor's. Like the other male dancers on the show, he had one term every year of Scottish country dance tuition at the College under the watchful eye of the tutor, Jean Milligan, one of the founders of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. As an amateur dancer, John was not expected to attend all the rehearsals whereas the girls, as professional dancers, were. John explained that although the boys 'hadn't really done [Scottish country dancing] with any career in mind it was going to be part of a career because we had to do all the activities in [the] Physical Education [qualification]'. The women, as professional dancers, were members of Equity, the performing arts and entertainment trade union, and earned twice as much as the men. The female professionals had to participate in more rehearsals than the men and were expected to help coach the men when they arrived at rehearsals, often at the end of a school or college day. Eleanor explained that when she started on the *White Heather Club* she earned 26 guineas a show, which according to the Bank of England's inflation calculator is worth over £500 today. By the time she left the programme in 1963, her wage had almost doubled to 48 guineas per show.[7] John earned £8 per show, which is around £150 today, and £12 per week from teaching in the early 1960s. This is the reverse of normal wage inequality.

COSTUMES

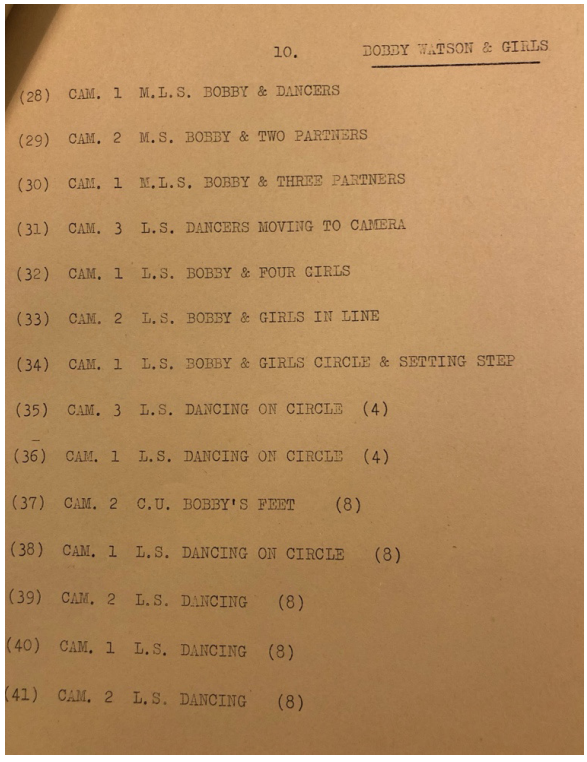
One commentator may have mixed up the *White Heather Club* with *The Kilt is My Delight* when stating that on the *White Heather Club*, the women wore 'white dresses with sashes', and that the dancers performed 'set-piece dances [...] with formal precision' (Royle 48). Eleanor Ward explained that on the contrary, as the BBC was keen to 'move on from the Scottish country dancing long white dress with the sash, some weeks we would have gorgeous, patterned dresses with all the petticoats' (Ballantyne 2019). At the beginning of each series, the women were fitted for their dance costumes and would wear the same brightly patterned, fashionable, waisted dress for an entire season. The fabrics were carefully chosen because some patterns did not work well on screen.

In the early years of the series the women wore high-heeled shoes, rather than the heel less, flat soled dancing shoes that the men wore and that were commonly worn by all Scottish country dancers. The men wore kilts, kilt socks, shirts with rolled-up sleeves and ties. It appears that tartan was particularly popular with viewers. Andy Stewart wore a kilt every week after his second appearance on the show. His 'tartan-clad image became indelibly etched in the public's imagination and a life-long relationship with the kilt began' (Stewart 2025 b).

REHEARSALS

Rehearsals were mostly held on Monday evenings and all day Tuesday. Tuesday was the usual transmission day. The dancers had their own rehearsal space and their Monday evening rehearsals were often held at Kelvinside Church Hall or Hillhead Burgh Hall, whilst the rest of

the cast rehearsed in the BBC's Studio 2. The dancers would not find out what dances they would perform in each week's show until the first rehearsal. In the early years, Tuesday rehearsals and the telerecording would take place at the BBC's Springfield Road studio unless the show was to be transmitted from an outside location. The Rehearsal Script for Tuesday 05 April 1960 shows that the band rehearsed for an hour before lunch and that the bulk of the afternoon rehearsal was taken up with rehearsing with the cameras. The camera scripts showed exactly what each camera would film and for how long. One camera script for a dance performed by Bobby Watson and some of the female dancers shows how complex these scripts were. Three cameras were used and each camera would be featured at different times. One camera might be focused on Bobby Watson, another on all of the dancers and a third on just one or two dancers. Sometimes a camera zooms in on Watson's feet. The amount of time each camera focuses on each subject area is marked in the script in groups of four or eight bars of music.



10. BOBBY WATSON & GIRLS

(28) CAM. 1 M.L.S. BOBBY & DANCERS

(29) CAM. 2 M.S. BOBBY & TWO PARTNERS

(30) CAM. 1 M.L.S. BOBBY & THREE PARTNERS

(31) CAM. 3 L.S. DANCERS MOVING TO CAMERA

(32) CAM. 1 L.S. BOBBY & FOUR GIRLS

(33) CAM. 2 L.S. BOBBY & GIRLS IN LINE

(34) CAM. 1 L.S. BOBBY & GIRLS CIRCLE & SETTING STEP

(35) CAM. 3 L.S. DANCING ON CIRCLE (4)

(36) CAM. 1 L.S. DANCING ON CIRCLE (4)

(37) CAM. 2 C.U. BOBBY'S FEET (8)

(38) CAM. 1 L.S. DANCING ON CIRCLE (8)

(39) CAM. 2 L.S. DANCING (8)

(40) CAM. 1 L.S. DANCING (8)

(41) CAM. 2 L.S. DANCING (8)

FIGURE 2
Camera Cues, 18 January 1960
With permission, University of Aberdeen Special Collections

The available space in the Springfield Road Studio had to be used creatively as many different camera angles were planned for each act. The large and unwieldy cameras were always moving, so the places that the dancers might move to in a dance were not dictated by the dance itself, but by what Iain MacFadyen had envisaged for each shot. John Ward explained that [on television] it 'looked as if we had tons of room', which, he suggested, was due to the 'clever use of the cameras' (Ballantyne 2019).

Scottish country dances can be quite long so it was usual to perform just a part of a dance on the show, depending on its place in the schedule and on the overall timing of the show. The Wards described a typical fast-paced final rehearsal:

> [JW] The cameras would have their programme to move in or from a corner, so we had to know when to move – gracefully or disgracefully.
>
> [EW] They [the cameras] were very hard to hold and they were big. Huge things.
>
> [JW] And Fadyie [Iain MacFadyen] was changing [the dances] right up until the last minute. I think we'd come in on the Tuesday, about the back of 4 [pm] and the last rehearsal

> would be at quarter to 5. Then the lights went down. You [to EW] were my partner and you'd have to quickly tell me what bit [of the dance] we were doing: [if] we were only doing the first eight bars of it or if we'd just go through it once or twice, because it would all be changed. Fadyie would have other things to do with the band over here [indicates to one side], and the Brand sisters or Andy [Stewart] would be doing something over there [indicates to the other side]. And that camera had to get there [indicates to a different direction], so you had to get out of the way quickly. We'd rehearsed the whole thing as if there were no cameras but Fadyie would then want us to come in at that bit there in the dance, and Dixie [Ingram] or whoever in the middle of it because he was going to do a solo with three of the girls or whatever. And that was all now part of the running of the show, so it wasn't just a Scottish country dance. It had moved on to being [part of] a real variety show. (2019)

Bobby Watson often annotated his rehearsal scripts. His notes might refer to where a dance appeared in the programme's running order or how many bars of introductory and exit music the dancers would have for any dance. The notes also provide some insight into why a particular dance in its usual format might not necessarily work on the show. On one script, he noted 'Floor covering bad' to remind himself that something would have to be altered if the dance was to look good on the television screen.[8]

By his final series of programmes as dance director in 1965, Watson was writing all his dance notes on the otherwise largely blank rehearsal scripts. Some of his notes include story ideas for the choreography of the dances he might perform with the girls on a show, or a note reminding him of which book to find a dance in. On the rehearsal script dated 19 September 1965, beside the entry for his solo dance, he merely noted that he was to perform 'something exciting'.[9] Perhaps he chose to perform his unique version of the Highland dance, *Sean Triubhas*, which he had performed on the 1958 *Hogmanay Show*, accompanying himself on the bagpipes, playing the instrument as he danced.

THE END OF THE RUN

The *White Heather Club* gave huge exposure to Scottish folk and traditional songs and popular bothy ballads. The performers presented these alongside new and often comic songs in an engaging manner. Scottish country dancing was also modernised and dances were recreated to look good on the small screen. Singer and star from the early years of the show, Joe Gordon, said that the fact that the content 'was a little bit different', meant that the programme had 'appealed to people at that time' [the early 1960s] (*Reunion* 18:26). However, it appears that through gradual changes in content, performers, hosts and production, the *White Heather Club* eventually reached the end of its popularity and the series finally ended in 1967, almost ten years after it started. The format had changed over the years but the excitement, informality and innovation of the early days had not endured with the programme. Lea Ashton thought that it had gone on for too long and that it should have ended its run around 1964 when it was still popular

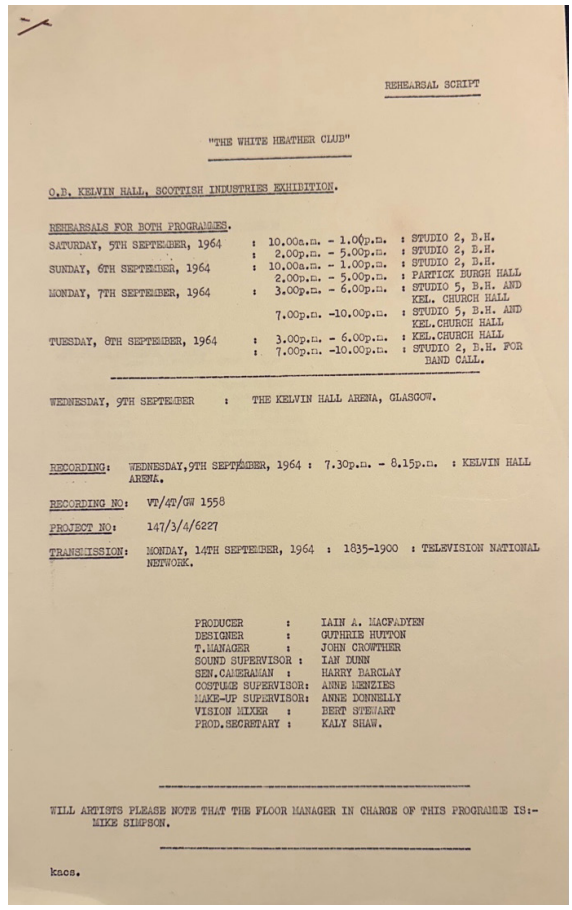
(*Reunion* 31:51). Former host Jimmie Macgregor observed that by 1968 'there was a tendency to sneer about [it], it was past its sell by date' (McLean 2020).

THE LEGACY OF *THE WHITE HEATHER CLUB*

[B] Broadcasting developments:

In 1958 the 25-minute programmes were recorded live at the time of transmission. Live broadcasts were complex and challenging and the performers had to know what they were doing. By the mid 1960s parts of individual shows were pre-recorded and sound was recorded separately and sent to Broadcasting House in London in advance of transmission.

The layout of the programme scripts changed from the early scripts, which were very detailed with every word typed in advance, to a series of almost blank pages, with a programme item number header at the top of each page. The information on the front page of each rehearsal script, which in 1959 had comprised of rehearsal times, locations and contents, transmission time and production crew, had by 1964 greatly increased to reflect a larger production crew. Extra lines were added to show recording, project and recording numbers, the cast list, the production crew list and dressing room allocations. In 1959 the production crew had consisted of a producer, designer, vision mixer, lighting supervisor, secretary and floor manager. By 1964 a technical manager, sound supervisor, senior cameraman, floor assistant, costume supervisor, and make up supervisor had been added. This all pointed to a larger and more professional operation which reflected advances in broadcasting technology and production. However, although the production crew had increased, the cast had decreased from the 1959 format of host plus four or five guest acts, band and dancers, to hosts plus one or two acts, band and dancers by 1965. It appears that as the production became more sophisticated, the show's popularity decreased.



REHEARSAL SCRIPT

"THE WHITE HEATHER CLUB"

O.B. KELVIN HALL, SCOTTISH INDUSTRIES EXHIBITION.

REHEARSALS FOR BOTH PROGRAMMES.

SATURDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 1964	10.00a.m. - 1.00p.m.	STUDIO 2, B.H.
	2.00p.m. - 5.00p.m.	STUDIO 2, B.H.
SUNDAY, 6TH SEPTEMBER, 1964	10.00a.m. - 1.00p.m.	STUDIO 2, B.H.
	2.00p.m. - 5.00p.m.	PARTICK BURGH HALL
MONDAY, 7TH SEPTEMBER, 1964	3.00p.m. - 6.00p.m.	STUDIO 5, B.H. AND KEL. CHURCH HALL
	7.00p.m. -10.00p.m.	STUDIO 5, B.H. AND KEL.CHURCH HALL
TUESDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 1964	3.00p.m. - 6.00p.m.	KEL.CHURCH HALL
	7.00p.m. -10.00p.m.	STUDIO 2, B.H. FOR BAND CALL.

WEDNESDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER : THE KELVIN HALL ARENA, GLASGOW.

RECORDING: WEDNESDAY,9TH SEPTEMBER, 1964 : 7.30p.m. - 8.15p.m. : KELVIN HALL ARENA.

RECORDING NO: VT/4T/GW 1558

PROJECT NO: 147/3/4/6227

TRANSMISSION: MONDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 1964 : 1835-1900 : TELEVISION NATIONAL NETWORK.

PRODUCER :	IAIN A. MACFADYEN
DESIGNER :	GUTHRIE HUTTON
T.MANAGER :	JOHN CROWTHER
SOUND SUPERVISOR :	IAN DUNN
SEN.CAMERAMAN :	HARRY BARCLAY
COSTUME SUPERVISOR:	ANNE MENZIES
MAKE-UP SUPERVISOR:	ANNE DONNELLY
VISION MIXER :	BERT STEWART
PROD.SECRETARY :	KALY SHAW.

WILL ARTISTS PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FLOOR MANAGER IN CHARGE OF THIS PROGRAMME IS:- MIKE SIMPSON.

kacs.

FIGURE 3
Rehearsal script cover page, 05 September 1964
With permission, University of Aberdeen Special Collections

[B] The cultural legacy

During its first years, the *White Heather Club* had broken with the formality associated with the BBC of the 1950s, namely the 'BBC accents' and formal speech dress and behaviour. The *White Heather Club's* informality extended to the programme's content and the light-hearted banter between the cast members, the new comic songs and even to the dancers' costumes.

It could be argued that the *White Heather Club* inspired the way in which other Scottish entertainment programmes continued to adopt an informal, party-style presentation. These include Hogmanay shows, Andy Stewart's own show, Grampian Television's *Round at Calum's* and *Calum's Ceilidh*. The success of the *White Heather Club* paved the way for BBC Scotland's mid-1960s television folk music programme, *The Hootenanny Show*. The *White Heather Club's* influence was seen in other countries too, for example, in Ireland's RTE hosted *Club* Céilí. This was an informal presentation of music and dance that was broadcast in the mid 1960s. In 1982 Canadian ATV began broadcasting the very popular *Up Home Tonight*, to the Canadian Maritimes provinces. The series, which ran until 1989, featured a host and guest artistes from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, who performed traditional music, song and dance to a studio audience, in a format strongly reminiscent of the *White Heather Club*.

Many of the performers who regularly appeared on the show went on to have very successful careers. These include Andy Stewart, dancers Bobby Watson, Isobel James and Dixie Ingram, singers Joe Gordon, Moira Anderson, Jimmie Macgregor and musicians Jimmy Shand, Bobby MacLeod and Ian Powrie. Songs that were created for the show, such as *Donald Where's Your Troosers, A Scottish Soldier* and *The Battle's O'er* also endured to the extent that many people do not realise today that they are products of the *White Heather Club* and not older, traditional songs.

It has become fashionable during the last few decades to decry tartan and dance bands and indeed, all the Scottish entertainment that previous generations enjoyed, which is perhaps part of the trend for one generation to denigrate the taste of the generation before it. However, the tide may be turning. Tartan remains a fashion item and kilts are popular wear for weddings, for ceilidh dances and for the 'Tartan Army' of Scottish football supporters when travelling abroad. Scottish country dance bands are still in great demand and there appears to be a resurgence of interest in an earlier generation of popular Scottish entertainers. Scottish tenor Jamie MacDougall recently performed a series of concerts to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the once vastly popular Scottish entertainer, Harry Lauder (McLean 2025).

Perhaps it is time to reassess the *White Heather Club*. Rather than look at it through a 'tartan tat' lens, we should celebrate it as an important and influential part of Scotland's rich cultural heritage

Endnotes

1 Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_White_Heather_Club> (Last accessed 20-02-2025).

2 Other than the very few episodes of the *White Heather Club* that are available online, the most useful general source of information come from:
a. *White Heather Club* rehearsal scripts at University of Aberdeen, Special Collections, MS 3605/5, 'Bobby Watson (1914–1997)'.
b. The comprehensive online resource created by journalist Graham Stewart, *Scotland on Air* wiki.scotlandonair.com.

3 'Listeners Seek Amusement', *Scotsman*, 16-01-1956, p.5 col.1.

4 'The White Heather Club', *Radio Times* (Scottish edition), 15 June 1961, p. 18.

5 Available at: <https://wiki.scotlandonair.com/wiki/1961> (Last accessed 08 August 2025).

6 University of Aberdeen, Special Collections, MS3605/5/1/1/1, 14 Sept 1959.

7 Available at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator> (Last accessed 25 February 2025).

8 MS 3605/5/1/1/1, Rehearsal script 03 April 1960.

9 MS3605/5/1/1/1, Rehearsal script 19 September 1965.

Links

The following White Heather Club programmes are available:

(02 June 1959) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9MoA_rFsPw

(31 May 1960) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_G3m3Onapa8

(10 October 1960) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9MoA_rFsPw

(31 December 1991) Reunion https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_fTDGOHITE

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Stewart, G. (2025 a), 'The Kilt is My Delight', *Scotland on Air*, <https://wiki.scotlandonair.com/wiki/The_Kilt_is_My_Delight> (Last accessed 08 August 2025).

Stewart, G. (2025 b), 'Andy Stewart', *Scotland on Air*, <https://wiki.scotlandonair.com/wiki/Andy_Stewart> (Last accessed 10 August 2025).

Stewart, G (2025 c), 'The White Heather Club', *Scotland on Air*, <https://wiki.scotlandonair.com/wiki/The_White_Heather_Club> (Last accessed 10 August 2025).

Stewart, G (2025 d), 'Iain MacFadyen', *Scotland on Air*, <https://wiki.scotlandonair.com/wiki/Iain_MacFadyen> (Last accessed 08 August 2025).

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‘Suppos þat þai be nocht bot fabill’: Medieval Film and Robert the Bruce[1]

Duncan Sneddon

Films set in the Middle Ages, by virtue of depicting a time before the movie camera, are necessarily imaginative recreations, rather than direct representations, of the past. Furthermore, they are made by and for people who look back on the medieval period through intervening centuries of change and of reflection on the past, in which ideologies from religious reform and restoration movements to nationalism, Romanticism and (post)modernism have made use of the past in creative, rhetorical, propagandistic and parodic ways. Thus, a contemporary filmmaker (or critic, actor, score composer, set designer and indeed viewer) may know and have experienced the Middle Ages not only through research and consulting primary sources (usually in translation) and visiting castles, cathedrals and other “medieval” locations, but also through art produced centuries after the Middle Ages ended, from statues and paintings to other medieval films. Contemporary expectations of medieval film – of how the Middle Ages looked and sounded – are largely shaped by our experiences of other medieval films, rather than by the “real” Middle Ages (which none of us have experienced) or by sober research and source criticism (which few people practice) (Sorlin 1980: 20). While historians may be irritated by anachronisms and other historical inaccuracies in films, audiences and critics are usually content with internal consistency and fidelity to a general sense of “decorum or fittingness” (Woods 2004: 47). An out of place accent disrupts the illusion of historical immersion (Woods cites Kevin Costner’s ‘casual surfer-boy inflection in *Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves*’) but ‘a fifteenth-century bridle on a fourteenth-century horse’ does not (Woods 2004: 47). The films about Robert the Bruce considered in this discussion, *The Bruce* (1996), *Outlaw King* (2018) and *Robert the Bruce* (2019) do have their share of anachronisms (Robert jumps the historical gun considerably in telling Scott to help his mother peel potatoes in *Robert the Bruce*, as this chieftain o the tuber race was of course unknown in Europe in the early fourteenth century), but the mere hunting out of historical errors makes for limited and uninteresting criticism on its own. As such, where there are clear divergences from known history in these films, they are approached here as choices made with narrative or thematic goals in mind, rather than mere historiographical

1 I would like to thank Dr. Valentina Bold, editor of *RoSC,* for advice, and the two anonymous reviewers for their suggestions to strengthen this article. I would also like to thank my friend Bria Mason, with whom I discussed these films while developing my analysis.

(or historiocinematic) blunders. As Salih notes, contemporary film criticism is less concerned with historical film as "authentic" representations of the past resembling academic historical consensus than it once was: "[e]xamining the points of contact between [academic and cinematic] modes of representing the past can be most informative, but their purposes and criteria for success are quite different." (Salih 2004: 20)

This leaves us looking for a theoretical model for approaching these films *qua* films rather than as more-or-less accurate reproductions of the past. One such is provided by Bettina Bildhauer in a thought-provoking study, *Filming the Middle Ages* (Bildhauer 2011), in which she develops a model for viewing medieval film as a coherent genre, with generic conventions beyond being set in the Middle Ages. Indeed, several of the films she considers as "medieval films" with respect to these conventions are not set in the medieval period at all, though they mostly have either fantasy or early modern settings which broadly resemble the medieval period (Aleksei German's *Hard to be a God* and Paul Wegener's *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam*) or connections to medieval figures in their plots and themes, (Ron Howard's *The Da Vinci Code* and Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *A Cantebury Tale*). She considers the following three traits to be characteristic of medieval film as a genre: that the Middle Ages were "allegedly less reliant on linear time, on writing and on individualism than modernity" (Bildhauer 2011: 11). These, she stresses, are grounded on modern perceptions or stereotypes about the medieval period, rather than necessarily being representative of the worldviews of the actual, historical Middle Ages. They are fundamental to how contemporary culture understands the Middle Ages to have been, and are thus fundamental to cinematic representation of the period (Buildhauer and Bernau 2009: 8 – 16). Accordingly, medieval films often feature non-linear narrative devices such as flashbacks and anachronisms, display a suspicion or critique of writing and are set in a world in which the individual subject is more or less subsumed into collective identities. We may compare this last point to the sixth of Umberto Eco's "Ten Little Middle Ages":

> 6. The Middle Ages of *national identities*, so powerful again during the last [i.e. 19th] century, when the medieval model was taken as a political utopia, a celebration of past grandeur, to be opposed to the miseries of national enslavement and foreign domination. (Eco 1998: 70)

For Eco, the present, or returning, Middle Ages we culturally experience and recreate now are often preoccupied with issues of national identity, something that we shall see is frequently the case in our three Robert the Bruce films: national independence, national leadership, the assumption of a national interest in which that leadership is not only entitled but obliged to act – these are constant concerns in films built around the story of a historical character who has been constructed over centuries as a national hero.

Bildhauer's model has been generally seen as a substantial contribution, especially in positioning medieval film as art which owes fidelity to generic conventions as well as (or perhaps more than) to a Rankean positivist attempt to depict the past

wie es eigentlich gewesen ist (Ganim 2012). While her book has been hailed for its systematically consistent approach and for her treatment of German film in particular (Lindlay 2014: 404, 406), it has also been criticised as a model for a cinematic genre for using characteristics which are widespread but hardly universal, Lindley arguing that "[f]ew of her criteria... are common enough to be definitive" and that the corpus of medieval-themed films is more diverse than a coherently-defined "medievalist cinema" allows, arguing instead for localised cinematic medievalisms of which the Weimar-inflected tradition identified by Bildhauer is only one (Lindlay 2014: 405 – 406). Chapman also doubts that a single theoretical framework can account adequately for the vast range of medieval films, arguing that Bildhauer's criteria relate well to the films studied in her book, but not necessarily to medieval film more generally, especially outwith the Weimar Expressionist tradition (Chapman 2012: 330 – 332, cf. Finke and Schichtman 2010: 39 - 40).

With such criticisms in mind, this study will consider the Bruce films in turn, first with observations about their historicity and presentation of their subject matter, and then with respect to Bildhauer's criteria. This study treats this small corpus of Bruce films – unquestionably medieval films with respect to setting – as a test for Bildhauer's model, while also finding the model a useful way to consider the filmmakers' choices in a wider generic context, rather than merely assessing them for how closely they approximate historians' understandings of the period and people they depict.

THE BRUCE, DIR. BOB CARRUTHERS AND DAVID MCWHINNIE (1996)

Filmed following the success of *Braveheart*, this tells the story of Robert the Bruce from just prior to his seizing the kingship of Scotland in 1306 to his victory at Bannockburn in 1314. The film depicts Bruce (Sandy Welch) as a consistent supporter and leader of the struggle against English domination, ignoring his and his family's earlier sometime affiliation with Edward I of England (played with typical bombast by Brian Blessed). He is presented as a straighforwardly patriotic hero, as a voiceover introducing the film intones:

> During the early years of the fourteenth century, the people of Scotland fought a series of long and bitter wars in the cause of freedom from the tyranny of Edward of England [...] One man had the courage to renew the fight. His name: Robert the Bruce, claimant to the vacant throne of Scotland. He alone was prepared to risk everything in a desperate last throw of the dice.

The war is presented straightforwardly as a national struggle for freedom, and while Bishop Wishart (Oliver Reed) chastises Bruce for thinking too much about Bruce the king and too little about the people of the Scottish kingdom, it is an unargued part of the narrative framing that the struggle against Edward is one of a national community, that the struggle requires the leadership of the right man (who unlike John Comyn is no puppet of Edward), that his victory by definition means justice and freedom for the nation as such.

With regard to plot and characterisation *The Bruce* makes a number of ahistorical choices.

Most notably, Bruce's murder of Comyn (Pavel Douglas) is recast to absolve Robert of guilt. Here, Comyn betrays and attempts to kill Bruce as the Scots army is ambushed by the English forces. Bruce survives the attempt and escapes, but his brother Nigel (Ross Dunsmore) is killed, having taken Robert's armour and been mistaken for him in a situation reminiscent of the death of Patrolcus in the *Iliad*. Bruce confronts Comyn in a church, both men – clad in armour – draw their dirks simultaneously and fight until Comyn is killed. The killing of an unarmed man on sacred ground, so awkward for the narrative of the heroic Bruce, is thus reframed as a fair fight in the immediate context, and as justified vengeance for Comyn's attempted murder of Bruce and the death of Nigel. Another ahistorical choice is the character of Bishop Wishart, whose role is increased from that of an ecclesiastical ally of Bruce to a former leader of the Knights Templar, a formidable warrior in his own right, whose personal involvement helps to turn the tide of the battle in the Scots' favour at Bannockburn, in which battle he is himself killed. These choices are ahistorical, but serve the film both in creating a straightforwardly heroic, idealised Bruce (comparable in this respect to beginning the film after, and never mentioning, Bruce's earlier affiliation with Edward), as well as providing Bruce with a foil in the form of Wishart, who can act as his moral guide and enable the film to invoke the mysterious associations in populuar culture of the Knights Templar as elite holy warriors. Similarly, the voiceover at the end of the film which states that Bruce "was to rule Scotland in peace and justice until his death in 1329" smooths over the continuation of war and power struggles such as the Soules Conspiracy (Penman 2014: 162 – 163, 224 – 225; Stevenson 2014: 55) in his post-Bannockburn reign, making Bannockburn a conclusive victory not merely in the consolidation of Bruce's kingship, but of wider moral good as well. The stakes – now achieved – are more clear-cut in a narrative sense.

The film is in English, with a few Scots words such as "wee", "bonnie" and "aye" used by the Scottish characters (Bruce at one point says "I ken them both", rather than the fully English "I know them both" or the fully Scots "I ken them baith"). The Scottishness of the Scots characters is thus indicated, but linguistically the film represents the English-dominant present rather than its Scots- and Gaelic-dominant medieval past, and also avoids ecclesiastical or diplomatic use of Latin. As Carol O'Sullivan notes, films in modern languages can make use of phrases or idiomatic constructions to suggest a medieval setting without needing to make the film consistently linguistically medieval (O'Sullivan 2009: 62 – 64). The same is true of phrases and constructions that suggest a Scottish setting.

With respect to Bildhauer's generic criteria, we can see that *The Bruce*'s narrative is not entirely bound by linear time. The film is bookended by scenes of Bruce's heart being taken on Crusade (which historically happened in Spain, but given the presence of the Great Pyramids in the background here appears to have been relocated to Egypt). Furthermore, there are two kinds of flashback used. When Robert learns of Nigel's death, he mourns and buries his brother, intercut with slow-motion footage of Nigel smiling and bantering from previous scenes in the film.

There is also one flashback to a time before the film's setting, as Wishart remembers his time on Crusade – pyramids again suggesting that this was in Egypt – using footage not previously seen by the viewer.

The film transcends the chronology of its historical setting in other ways. Some of these are trivial anachronisms, such as Dee Hepburn's perm or musicians playing modern Highland pipes. Others are more interesting, and relate to the construction of Robert the Bruce and the historical memory of the Wars of Independence in literature and popular culture. The story of Bruce being inspired to fight on by watching a spider spinning its web – unattested in contemporary sources, and recognised as legendary since the nineteenth century at least (Maxwell 1897: 14 – 16) – is relayed twice here. The first time follows Nigel's death, as Bruce hides in a cave from pursuing English soldiers. This scene (which also features flashbacks to footage of Comyn from earlier in the film) shows a spider spinning its web, not – as in the traditional story – repeatedly trying, failing, and eventually succeeding in spanning a gap in the cave. Thus, the scene relies on the audience's prior knowledge of the story, as there is no obvious connection otherwise between the spider and Bruce's current situation in the film.

The second time (using the same musical theme as the first) is in the buildup to the film's climax, when Bruce, having recaptured his castle, finds that his wife has been taken hostage. Wandering through the castle, he sees a spider spinning a web. The scene cuts back and forth between the spider and Bruce and Wishart discussing their situation and the spider's:

> Wishart: What do you see?
>
> Bruce: Oh, one of our subjects in as much trouble as we are. Trying to build his little home and live in peace. [addressing spider] You're just like me. Trying and failing.
>
> Wishart: This time you'll win.
>
> Bruce: Six times I've tried. Six times I've failed.
>
> Wishart: You'll succeed. Don't you sense it?
>
> Bruce: I can sense... the loss of my brother. The loss of my family. The loss of my hope.
>
> Wishart: He'll [i.e. the spider] try again. So should you.
>
> Bruce: If I fail, I'll lose everything.
>
> Wishart: We all do. Sometimes it's, it's better than to have no life at all.
>
> Bruce: I'm terrified of losing.
>
> Wishart: I know. But the tide must turn.

Wishart then informs Bruce that Edward I has died, and that the tide of the war is indeed turning. This scene uses the traditional story, but subverts it subtly. Bruce does not, as in the story and as earlier in the film, obvserve the spider and draw his own conclusions about persevering, rather his inner struggle and doubts are externalised in dialogue, and he requires Wishart, his advisor and spiritual guide, to interpret the spider's lesson and the current situation of the war for him (and thus for the audience).

There are also instances in which the historical memory of the Wars of Independence in later literature is invoked. One comes near the start of the film, with Edward I rousing his troops, saying

"I declare that Scotland is no longer a nation, but a province of England." This seems to refer to Burns' "Sic a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation", in which the narrator calls post-1707 Scotland "England's province" and declares that he would rather be dead, as Bruce and Wallace are, than endure this (Noble and Hogg 2003: 393 – 394). More strikingly, Bruce's speech at Bannockburn at the film's climax combines phrases from the Declaration of Arbroath (written in 1320, six years after Bannockburn) and another Burns poem, "Scots Wha Hae". The speech is quoted below, with the phrases – direct or slightly adapted quotations or allusions – from the Declaration of Arbroath in bold and those from Burns in italics:

> *Now is the day. Now is the hour.* **It is not for glory, or honour, or riches that we fight** this day**. We fight for freedom alone, which no man will willingly give up but with his life.** *See even now your enemy approaches. Proud Edward brings with him the chains of slavery.* Why? They have not lands here, or homes here. Yet they come here to make this nation their own. We alone can stop them! If there are those among you who do not have the will to fight, you may leave now with no dishonour. **But honest men who value freedom above all** else will carry the fight this day. And if we stay then we must be ready to *do or to die!* (cf. Noble and Hogg 2003: 466 – 468); Fergusson 1970: 9)

In weaving these later, well-known, texts into the speech, the film positions the significance of the battle – and of Bruce – as something not bound only to its immediate historical context, and also explicitly places the film as a representation of Bruce's leadership within a continuing tradition, alongside two prestigious, important texts in the construction of Scottish national identity. By putting words from later texts into Bruce's mouth (and bearing in mind that Burns' poem is of course also framed as Bruce's pre-battle speech), as with the recreation of the tale of the spider, *The Bruce* makes creative use of anachronism, making its central character congruent with the culturally constructed Bruce of subsequent centuries, rather than with the historical Robert I.

Bildhauer's second criterion, that of the critique of writing, "showing written documents to be dangerous instruments of power, often in the hands of self-interested elites... one of the genre's defining features is its sceptical stance towards writing" (Bildhauer 2011: 100 - 101) is also in evidence. Characters on both sides of the conflict show disdain for written texts. On the English side, Prince Edward's assistant Aubrey sarcastically asks de Bohun if he needs instructions for a mission written down, but most of the comment – all negative – on written texts comes from Scottish characters. Following defeat in the film's first battle, with Bruce presumed dead, the Scottish nobles are shown squabbling about their next move. They are shown jabbing at, but not reading, documents which contain agreements which are not outlined but which are clearly unable to maintain a peaceful order. As they bicker, one says:

> We do not concede on a piece of paper what we do not concede on a battlefield!... What we will not do is sign away on a piece of paper what is our right.

Wishart, too, dismisses the document, jabbing

at it and declaring it, "a recipe for villainy". He further disregards the authority of a written document at Bruce's coronation, announcing, "I have this day recieved the papal bull of excommunication against Robert. Let nobody doubt that as long as I am head of God's church in Scotland, it will remain unserved." In these cases written documents are presented as impediments to the just outcome (Bruce's kingship) and thus can and should be dismissed; whatever authority lies behind them can be challenged by force of arms or simply not acceded to. Power on the ground trumps power on the page, the former is where the hero can fight and win and has support, the latter is where his enemies seek to manipulate and marginalise him. The sword is mightier than the pen.

Bildhauer's third criterion, an anti-individualism that is "invoked in medieval film so often that it constitutes a genre characteristic" (Bildhauer 2011: 151), is also present in *The Bruce*, inasmuch as the film posits as the ideal solution to the tribulations besetting the Scots the complete identification of Bruce with the nation. His motivation throughout is proclaimed in the introductory voiceover, as we have seen. Later, when Wishart criticises Bruce for not considering the consequences of his murder of Comyn, it becomes apparent that Bruce must abandon personal interest and ambition just as Wishart must set aside his qualms about murder on sacred ground. Both must forget personal interests in the service of the undifferentiated, single interest of the Scottish people:

> Wishart: Perhaps you should think less about Bruce the king, more about Scotland the kingdom. Have you thought about the wrath of Edward? [...] I thank you for that, Bruce. The people of Scotland thank you.
>
> Bruce: I don't have to listen to this.
>
> Wishart: Oh yes you do. Your soul needs me. Your soul needs me very badly, I know. I'm the only one that can crown you king of Scotland.
>
> Bruce: You'd still do it?
>
> Wishart: There may be no other choice. I cannot condone what you have done, but for the sake of the country I will crown you king.

The unity of the Scottish nation behind Bruce's leadership is encapsulated during the climactic Battle of Bannockburn. With the fight in the balance, a group of women improvise a banner with the Scottish flag. They give it to two children, who in turn hand it to one of the Scottish soldiers. He brings it to Wishart who cries, "The nation fights! The whole nation must fight!" and leads the charge of the *sma fowk* that turns the battle in the Scots' favour, the women throwing stones and fighting with discarded weapons. Women, children, the young, the old, the warriors and the clergy all engage in the fight to secure Bruce's victory and thus, by the film's definition, justice, freedom and peace for the nation as such.

We can see that *The Bruce* demonstrates all three of Bildhauer's posited generic characteristics for medieval film, with the rejection of strict temporal linearity and chronological integrity, of the technology of writing and of the individual, autonomous subject all being key to how the film constructs the role, motivations and resonance of Bruce as an idealised patriotic hero incarnating the destiny of his nation.

OUTLAW KING, DIR. DAVID MACKENZIE (2018)

Outlaw King opens with the submission of Robert the Bruce (Chris Pine), John Comyn (Callan Mulvey) and the leading Scots nobility to Edward I (Stephen Dillane) in 1304, and follows Bruce's taking of the Scottish kingship and guerilla campaign to maintain it, culminating with the Battle of Loudoun Hill in 1307. It thus from the outset presents Bruce in a more complex light than does *The Bruce*. We see him initially as a reluctant pragmatist, a man who admires William Wallace but who recognises the futility of prolonging war in the face of Edward's obvious military superiority. In this sense *Outlaw King* displays a greater historical fidelity than *The Bruce*, it is willing to depict Robert and his family as political actors seeking to advance their own power in whatever way is practical. This also allows greater character development for Bruce himself, as seeing the popular anger against the English authorities after Wallace's execution provokes him to abandon the pragmatic submission which had been chafing him to pursue "justice" through a renewed campaign for national liberation.

Outlaw King does have its own departures from historicity, however, notably in its presentation of the final battle. The Battle of Loudoun Hill is the climax to the film, and is really a conflation of that historical battle with the Battle of Bannockburn. While following the outlines of the historical Battle of Loudoun Hill – including the Scots digging ditches to force the superior English cavalry into a narrow space where they can be contained and countered – certain features are more reminiscent of the later battle. Most clearly, the presence of Edward II as the leader of the defeated English army is something which has been transposed from Bannockburn to Loudoun Hill, as he was not present at Loudoun. The battle is presented as a decisive victory for Bruce, and is followed by a quick summary of subsequent events in the war via onscreen titles while Bruce is reunited with his wife Elizabeth (Florence Pugh). More subtly, the Scots forces marching to Loudoun are shown singing "Hey Tuttie Tatie", the tune for the Burns poem "Scots Wha Hae" and traditionally said to have been sung by the Scots before Bannockburn (Noble and Hogg 2003: 462). Bruce's victory at Loudoun Hill, his first victory in a pitched battle against the English forces, comes to stand for his more famous victory seven years later. The end of the battle sees a radical departure from the conclusion of Bannockburn, however, as Edward II is allowed to escape with no effort made to capture him. While the English king was hard-pressed in his flight from Bannockburn, as Bruce's forces knew that they could name their terms for his ransom, thus bringing an end to the war and recognition of Bruce's kingship, in *Outlaw King* he is allowed to crawl back to his own men through the mud and over the corpses, sobbing and retching. It is a deeply ahistorical conclusion, but one which in the film allows for the unpleasant antagonist to be utterly humiliated, and for Bruce to win a clear victory while being shown as magnanimous enough to allow Edward to escape rather than killing a defeated and helpless enemy. It also brings the film back to where it started, with

Edward's taunts during their duel at the film's beginning repaid as he is defeated by Bruce at its end.

The film is mostly in English, with a few Scots words used by the Scottish characters. The linguistic landscape of the film is more complex than that of *The Bruce*, with Latin prayers and liturgical chants, Bruce speaking in French to some freed French prisoners, and songs in Scots and Gaelic sung by characters in the film. Gaelic is notably missing from the film's dialogue, however, with Hebridean characters speaking in Highland-accented English (including to each other) and one of the Islay women singing, somewhat incongruously, the Scots song "The Blackbird". The recitation of Bruce's genealogy at his inauguration at Scone is also given in English and goes back only as far as David I, although in the only account we have of such a recitation from a Scottish royal inauguration, that of Alexander III in 1249, this was done in Gaelic and was traced back to the legendary Goídel Glas and Scota, daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh (Bannerman: 1989: 121).

Considering *Outlaw King* with respect to Bildhauer's model, we find that her first criterion, that of the use of non-linear narrative is not present. There are no flashbacks to earlier moments in the film or to events from before it started. There is an oblique reference to the famous late story about the spider, as there is a shot of a dewy web on a branch before the battle at Loudoun Hill. We do not see a spider spinning it, and neither is it clear that Bruce himself sees the web, but any viewer familiar with the story will recognise the significance of the image, even if it is not given the kind of extended, explicit treatment seen in *The Bruce*.

With respect to the suspicion that Bildhauer posits that medieval film displays towards writing, however, there are many examples in *Outlaw King*. She writes that "[medieval films] abound with written death sentences, intercepted and manipulated letters, forged contracts, treacherous invitations, eviction notices and arrest warrants, usually used unfairly by those in power." (Bildhauer 2011: 101). What we see in *Outlaw King* is very much in this line. Indeed, the written word is present almost exclusively in this film as an instrument of English domination. This is so in the bureaucratic apparatus of English authority, as Bruce is shown signing conscription orders for Aymer de Valence, the leader of the English administration in Scotland. Likewise, when Bruce goes to Berwick to bring taxes from his estates, he deposits the money with a clerk keeping written tax records. Both conscription and the burden of taxation had already been seen to be resented, and Bruce had been discomfited by seeing the impact of this imposition on the common people on his estates. Later, when he tries to convince the MacDougall chief to join him, he says his victory would mean "no more taxes to Edward, no more good men dying in wars not of their making" – two evils which relied on written records.

Writing is also used in the intimidating public display of English power. While in Berwick, Bruce sees the arm of the executed Wallace tied to the merkat cross for all to see, along with a sign reading (in English), "The Outlaw William Wallace".

It is seeing the immediate fury of the common people at this display that convinces Bruce of the need to renew the fight against Edward. Later, an identical inscription can be seen next to Wallace's decapitated head on London Bridge.

Renewing that fight means breaking oaths of fealty to Edward, oaths which Bruce acknowledges to his brothers were sworn on Edward's Bible. Here, it is the sacred written word that is instrumentalised for control, something Bruce can only counteract by having his own men swear on the same sacred word at his inauguration.

The attempt to break up the Bruce family by sundering Bruce's captured wife Elizabeth and daughter Marjorie from him also uses writing – Marjorie is taken by a nun "to our convent for religious training", which would presumably involve Latin literacy. Elizabeth is offered freedom by Prince Edward if she signs a document annulling her marriage, which she refuses to do when he inadvertedly reveals that Bruce is still at large.

In these instances writing is part of the apparatus of state power, as much an instrument of the domination of Scotland by England as the siege engines, warhorses and longbows which gave Edward victory at the start of the film. It is not so easily circumvented as in *The Bruce*. Though not part of the official structures of domination in the same way, the treacherous potential of the written word is revealed when Comyn and Bruce meet:

> Comyn: I confess I was surprised to read your letter. "I do urgently desire to discuss with you a matter most delicate." It's a bit cryptic, wouldn't you say?
>
> Bruce: It was intentional.
>
> Comyn: I see. And if I were to infer that your aim was in fact to reignite a rebellion...We already tried it. For eight bloody years, and we failed.
>
> [...]
>
> Comyn: You're not worthy of our country. And I swear I'll do whatever it takes to keep you from being its king. And once I explain to Edward the meaning of your furtive letter to me, he'll place a noose over your head and Scotland's crown upon mine.

Upon which Bruce, apparently in a panic, stabs Comyn and flees. While *Outlaw King* does not give the same narrative justification for the slaying of Comyn as *The Bruce* does – Comyn is unarmed, and has not tried to kill Bruce – his open declaration of his intention to betray Bruce clearly undercuts any sympathy for him, and relies explicitly on using Bruce's written words treacherously against him.

Indeed, the Scottish characters make little use of writing in *Outlaw King*. It seems significant in view of the repeated use of writing as an instrument of English domination that when the Scottish clergy debate what to do about Bruce's murder on holy ground, they do so sitting around a table on which there are packets of documents all unopened, a large book (? a Bible) which is closed, feather quills which lie idle. They can all read and write, of course, but while debating supporting Bruce's insurrection they do not do so. Likewise, a scene featuring the Scots nobles debating in a church has them standing by an altar on which are two large closed books. The

technology of the written word is not as actively present a part of the Scottish, or Bruce, side of the conflict as of the Comyn and English side. In this light it is not surprising that when depicting Bruce and his small force crossing a loch, that the film should omit what John Barbour's account shows him doing, keeping his men entertained by reading a chivalric romance to them:

> Swa with swymming and with rowyng
>
> Þai brocht þaim our land and all þar thing.
>
> Þe king þe quhile meryly
>
> Red to þaim þat war him by
>
> Romanys off worthi Ferambrace
>
> Þat worthily our-comyn was
>
> Throw þe rycht douchty Olywer...
>
> (McDiarmid and Stevenson 1980: Book III, ll. 433 – 439. *Ys* emended to þs)

Such use of the written word for leisure, for maintaining *esprit de corps*, would be out of keeping with how *Outlaw King*, in common with much medieval film, sees literacy as basically a tool of domination by the powerful.

Bildhauer's third criterion, that of the purportedly anti-individual nature of the medieval period is less in evidence in *Outlaw King* than in *The Bruce*, as while Bruce is shown to be inspired by a desire for justice for the people in general (and for Wallace's death in particular), and striving for the justice which they desire themselves, there is less of a straightforward identification of Bruce with the Scottish nation. *Outlaw King* is more willing than *The Bruce* to show divisions among the Scots, with reasons for not supporting Bruce (such as the MacDougall chief being a relative of the murdered Comyn) being shown as understandable. While these alienated factions do unite in time for the battle at Loudoun Hill, the film problematises the equation of Bruce's cause with Scottishness in a way that *The Bruce* does not. In *The Bruce*, Comyn is a willing English puppet from the beginning, while in *Outlaw King* he aspires to collaboration with Edward I only when he knows that Bruce is planning to renew a war which he sees as a hopeless waste of life. Indeed, in their meeting in the kirk, Comyn's argument that "the people are tired of war and suffering" and blaming the selfish ambition of the Bruces for the divisions that undermined the previous war effort are reasonable ones that are only undone by his sudden plan to betray Bruce to Edward.

In that same conversation, the following exchange takes place:

> Bruce: Wallace was tortured and slaughtered. The people aren't tired, they are desperate for justice.
>
> Comyn: Wallace got what he deserved. He wasn't a man, he was an idea. A dangerous and destructive idea, almost as dangerous as the idea you're proposing. You Bruces are all the same.

Here, Comyn denies Wallace a real identity as an individual, arguing metaphorically that his only real existence was as an idea in the minds of others, and likewise denies Bruce individuality by claiming that the Bruces "are all the same".

The anti-individual thesis, however, is complicated by James Douglas (Aaron Taylor-Johnson). His affiliation with Bruce and participation in his campaign is consistently

framed in terms of his struggle to assert his identity. His family's lands having been taken by Edward I's administration, he seeks to recover not only them, but his identity thereby, telling Bruce simply, "I want my name back." At the start of the film, he petitions Edward for his lands, which had been granted to Sir Richard de Clifford, and Edward sarcastically dismisses him, declaring, "Royal decree – I never want to hear the name Douglas again." James' subsequent use of "Douglas! Douglas!" as his war cry is thus an act of reclaiming the identity denied to him by Edward. Edward, despite his mockery, is obliged to hear the name again, when he hears a report of Douglas' success in retaking and then destroying his family's stronghold:

> Messenger: Sir Richard's castle in Scotland has also fallen. The man responsible may have been mad. He was heard screaming the same word over and over. "Douglas."

Finally, in the climactic battle at Loudoun Hill, Douglas himself confronts Clifford:

> Douglas: Clifford! You know who I am? [strikes Clifford to the ground] What's my fucking name?
>
> Clifford: Douglas!
>
> Douglas: [kills him] Yes!

In *Outlaw King*, Douglas' insistance on his name, his repeated assertion of an identity he forces others to recognise, does not sit easily within Bildhauer's generic schema for medieval film.

ROBERT THE BRUCE, DIR. RICHARD GRAY (2019)

The most recent film in our corpus saw Angus Macfadyen reprise the role of Robert the Bruce he had played in *Braveheart* in 1995. The film mostly takes place in the winter of 1313 – 1314, though it also includes scenes set in 1306 and at an unspecified point after the Battle of Bannockburn (1314). Most of the film follows Bruce during his lowest ebb. Having claimed the crown but failed to gain the kingdom, he dismisses the remnants of his army and heads into the wilderness alone. Attacked and wounded by traitors from his forces who seek the bounty on his head, he is taken in by a woman named Morag (Anna Hutchison) and her family in an isolated farm, and lives with them for some time, seeing the effect of the wars on the common people. Fighting alongside the family and their friends, he defeats a party of local clansmen allied with the Comyns and rejoins his men, who have continued their resistence in his absence, ready for him to lead them once more. The film closes with the following on-screen text:

> Through the sacrifice of thousands of Scottish families, Robert the Bruce united the nation by winning a decisive battle at Bannockburn. He drove the English army out of Scotland. After thirty years of fighting, England recognized Scotland's independence and Robert's uncontested position as King of Scots. Under his rule, Scotland flourished. As King, Robert the Bruce never owned a castle. Instead he made his home with the soldiers, and with the families of those he fought alongside.

This ahistorical, idealised portrait of Bruce's post-Bannockburn reign (which, as with *The Bruce*

erases such political disunity as demonstrated in the Soules Conspiracy) creates the paradoxical image of a demotic king. While entirely unmoored from historical reality, the notion of the king lodging with common folk and living the life of his subjects is a logical culmination of Bruce's character in the film. Comyn taunts him at the start of the film, "You want the one thing you cannot have. To be William Wallace. To be loved as he was," and the arc of Bruce's character throughout is of closer identification with the common people. Initially this led him to try to end the suffering of a prolonged and apparently unwinnable war, but the loyalty to him as king shown by Morag's family inspires him not only to renew the fight, but to rule as a different kind of king. In his speech to them before the climactic fight he tells them, "You've changed me. You've changed the king I'll be, and the land we'll live in." The concluding presentation of a king living among the people, not merely ruling over them, is congruent with the Bruce of the film as he becomes, if not the Bruce of history as he was.

This idealised portrait of Bruce as a hero truly of the nation aligns with the nationalist politics of the film more broadly. The strong identification of Bruce and his supporters with the Scottish nation as such will be discussed when we come to Bildhauer's criterion of the anti-individualism of medieval film, but two other points bear mention here. The first is that while the two other films discussed here, and especially *The Bruce*, show Comyn as an active or potential collaborator with the English authorities, only in *Robert the Bruce* is this linguistically marked. In the two other films, the actors playing Comyn spoke in Scottish-accented English, and were clearly part of the same linguistic and cultural community as Bruce himself, thus making his turning on Bruce an act of national betrayal. In *Robert the Bruce*, by contrast, Comyn's English affiliation is emphasised by having the actor, Jared Harris, speak in his native southern English dialect. As there is no mention of him being a Scottish noble, it appears that he is being portrayed as an English nobleman, and affiliation to him is clearly marked as affiliation to England. The second is outside the text of the film itself. Two years after the release of *Robert the Bruce*, Angus Macfadyen reprised the titular role for a third time, speaking in character as Bruce for a party political broadcast for the Alba Party, a minor Scottish nationalist party, during the campaign for the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary election (Alba Party 2021). While this broadcast was made after the film, it points to the nationalist political affiliations of Macfadyen (who co-wrote and produced *Robert the Bruce* as well as starring in it) and to his nationalist interpretation of the historical character of Robert the Bruce.

Regarding language, the film is in English. The use of an English accent for the character of Comyn has been noted already. The other characters speak in Scottish-accented English with occasional Scots words and phrases. However, many of the actors are not Scottish, and their attempts at speaking in Scottish accents are often very unconvincing (the American Chris Pine and Englishman Aaron Taylor-Johnson in *Outlaw King* did a much better job in this regard),

and to this Scot at any rate are distractingly bad[2]. A similar breaking of the illusion of medieval authenticity is brought about by characters bearing incongruous names like Carney, Ylfa and (for a young girl) Iver. Gaelic, Latin and French are entirely absent.

Of our three films, *Robert the Bruce* is the one that best exemplifies Bildhauer's criterion of the rejection of linear time as a generic characteristic of medieval film. As with the other films, this includes the use of the spider story as a familiar part of the Bruce legend as it has developed over the centuries, being part of the Bruce story viewers expect to see, even if it was not something that happened in his historical life. Here, it is given extended treatment. Bruce, wounded and delirious while hiding in a cave, sees the spider spinning its web. The film repeatedly cuts away to other scenes – his enemies trying to track him down, the domestic life of Morag's family – returning twice to Bruce watching the spider in silence. Finally, in the fourth scene featuring the spider, Bruce mutters, as he heaves himself to his feet and staggers out of the cave:

> I understand, I understand.
>
> The spider's web must be spun.
>
> Our soul's journey must be won.
>
> The king's delight must be undone.
>
> The song of justice must be sung.

Most of this verse is straightforward, but the line "The king's delight must be undone" is never explained. It could refer to Edward I, in which case his delight might be his domination of Scotland. Perhaps more likely, in view of Bruce's evolving understanding of himself as king over the course of the film, the king is himself, his delight is the selfish pursuit of power, and its undoing is governing for the good of the people. The spider legend is here developed from being a general lesson about perseverance in the face of adversity to being specifically about Bruce's situation at the time and the achievement of his political goals.

There are also what we might call artistic anachronisms. One such is a poem, attributed in the film to the late father of the family sheltering Bruce and recited by his daughter for Bruce:

> There's blood in the lochs
>
> there is blood in the house
>
> and our rocks
>
> and mountain peaks.
>
> And when we look up to our maker
>
> the sky burns
>
> brushed with the scarlet ink
>
> of those hearts we have loved.
>
> Do not lose hope.

2 One friend with whom I watched this film asked, "Why are they all talking like Groundskeeper Willie?" James Berardinelli's review (Berardinelli 2020) has the accents ranging "from passable to comically bad." In contrast Owen Gleiberman – himself an American – wrote that "the brogues are mostly fine. In fact, the two best brogues in the movie may be by American actors" (Gleiberman 2020). Thus, while viewers more familiar with Scottish speech may find – like Woods' assessment of Kevin Costner's accent in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (Woods 2004: 47) – that the illusion of immersion is compromised by the incongruous accents of the actors, others may have a different subjective standard for what they consider to be authentically Scottish. Whether this standard has been shaped more by Groundskeeper Willie than by listening to actual Scottish people is more than I can say, but if so it would provide a linguistic counterpart to the observation above that people know what feels fittingly authentic in a medieval film because of what they have seen in other medieval films.

> A bleeding sky will not succumb to the shadow that darkens this land.
>
> For it's just the sun rising above the dirty huts
>
> that is the dawn of a new day.

This is entirely alien in form and idiom to the Scottish poetry of the period, Scots, Gaelic or Latin. Its free verse form and sentiment belong to the present rather than the medieval past, an attempt to make this emotional expression – outlining key themes of the film – resonate with contemporary aesthetic sensibilities.

Similarly, the form of the sepulchral inscription at the end of film, "Scott MacFie/ 1303-1314/ Bannockburn", while clearly in strict historical terms out of place in the fourteenth century, is something viewers will recognise from modern memorials and war graves.

The use of flashbacks and intercutting with scenes taking place at different times is also a feature of this film. The film opens with the confrontation between Bruce and Comyn, presented as a story told by Morag to her children. It cuts back and forth between the events she describes (in 1306) and her telling the story in the "present" (1313). Enough time has elapsed for competing versions of the events to exist, and Scott disputes his mother's story, citing a version less flattering to Bruce which he has heard from his uncle, who is later revealed to be affiliated with the Comyns. She maintains that her brother in law may have his version but she has her own, and resumes the story, in which Comyn first attacks the unarmed Bruce. Her assertion of the validity of different versions of stories about historical events can be read as the film's own defence of its presentation of its idealised version of the Bruce in this fictionalised version of his story: other films may have their version of what happened, and professional historians may have theirs, but those are simply versions among many and this version has a right to exist and be told alongside them. Coming so early in the film, it seems like an upfront defence against critiques of the film's rather loose historicity.

She continues to tell the story, apparently resuming it the following day in the present of the film's main narrative, and we see the conclusion of the confrontation between Bruce and Comyn, a montage of Bruce's subsequent defeats, leaving off with the situation as it is when Bruce disbands his army, with Morag confident that he will raise a new one and resume the fight.

This is an example of the film moving between the past and the narrative present, but there are also instances of the blending of past and future together. When Morag goes to see a witch, they discuss a vision which the witch had told Morag about before Scott's birth (so before the time of the film) about his death in battle (not shown, but between the end of the main narrative and the film's epilogue). Similarly, as Bruce recovers in Morag's home, he dreams of his own past – his coronation, his wife, his former comrades – and also sees Scott, badly wounded, telling him that they have won and the English are gone, before reciting the spider verse. In these instances supernatural prophecy and feverish dreams allow for a temporal instability reaching beyond the film's main narrative.

Non-linear storytelling is also used as a

narrative shortcut, as the film also features a montage in which Bruce trains the young people in swordfighting and archery, intercut with scenes of music, dancing and domestic activities, over the course of which we see the young people improve as fighters and Bruce grow closer to the family. Montage is also used at the film's conclusion, as footage of Morag's life with Scott is intercut with her at his grave, her voiceover saying:

> And so that's our story, Scott. Your story. Your blood set us free at Bannockburn. I see you everywhere. You, in the morning mist. You, in all the wee beasties. You, in the river running free. You believed in laughter. You, in my dreams.

Opening that final monologue with "And so that's our story" ties the film's ending to its beginning, as though she is picking up from her previous storytelling, simply finishing off the story she had started telling Scott when he was alive, and continued telling him after his death.

Finally, we have another kind of intercutting at the end of Bruce's speech before the final fight. As he finishes the speech asking "Is that not worth fighting for?", one by one each member of the household replies "Aye", followed by a shot of each character in turn getting into position for the coming fight, following their affirmation with action as they prepare to put into practice what they have resolved to do.

In contrast to this extensive range of ways in which *Robert the Bruce* embraces non-linear narrative, writing is far less present in this film than in the two others. In one instance, during the montage of Bruce's defeats, we see an English soldier reading a proclamation of a reward for Bruce's capture. This aligns with Bildhauer's observation that writing is commonly shown in medieval film as a tool of oppression (Bildhauer 2011: 101), and we can see this being put into practice as traitors in Bruce's dismissed army are motivated by the reward to try to kill the king, leading to his being taken in by Morag.

The other instance is less straightforward in its relationship to Bildhauer's argument. As in *Outlaw King*, the contents of a letter are key to how Bruce's meeting with Comyn develops, but here from the opposite direction. In *Robert the Bruce*, Bruce intercepts a letter from Comyn to his men detailing plans to ambush Bruce, alerting Bruce to Comyn's treachery. This is an intercepted letter, which Bildhauer lists among the treacherous and manipulated documents which demonstrate medieval film's genre characteristic of the distrust of writing (Bildhauer 2011: 101), but in this case it is the film's protagonist who benefits. Writing is used as a tool for treachery and the subjegation of Scotland, but here it is writing's key weakness, that it can be read by anyone who finds it, which serves the protagonist – that is, which serves what the film positions as justice.

If the relationship of writing in *Robert the Bruce* to its role in Bildhauer's thesis is ambivalent, her argument about the anti-individuality of medieval film is much more clearly applicable. The loss of individual identity and merging of the individual character with the larger community, generally of the nation in this case, is present throughout this film.

The first instance comes at the beginning, at the meeting between Bruce and Comyn. Comyn

taunts Bruce:

> You want the one thing you cannot have. To be William Wallace. To be loved as he was. To be brave like him. Be free, like him. What a wretched wish that is for you to have. How it must coil in your gut! Is that what you want now? To throw yourself upon my sword and die today? To be, for a moment, a hollow, empty echo of the man William Wallace was?

Comyn mocks Bruce for insecurity in his own individual identity, wishing to have the genuine popular esteem of – and even to be – the now-dead Wallace. Here we see the prospect of one individual identity blending into another, but the process of lost individual identity does not end there. One of the men who sets out to betray Bruce later remarks, "Scotland died with the Wallace, if you ask me." In this framing, identification with Wallace is the same thing as identification with the nation as such, so Wallace himself loses his individual personhood and becomes the incarnate – and failed – nation. Similarly to Comyn's remark in *Outlaw King* that Wallace "wasn't a man, he was an idea", the dead freedom fighter and the cause of freedom he espoused merge.

There are instances in *Robert the Bruce* in which the individual is subordinated to their familial or clan affiliation. When the soldiers out to betray Bruce encounter Morag's family, the young Scott tells them of how Bruce had praised his late father's bravery. One of them rebukes him, saying, "We're with the Comyn clan, lad, as should you be. Your lords have pledged themselves to him." The preferences of individuals are unimportant, they are to be subordinated to affiliations decided on their behalf by their unaccountable leaders. Morag's family rejects this framing, and they later shelter and fight for Bruce against their own clansmen, but the authority of clan affiliations is the basic assumption, the norm against which they rebel in aligning themselves to a national loyalty through the person of the king.

The explicit identification of individuals with the nation, expressed in embodied terms, is made by Bruce in his speech to Morag's family as they await attack at the climax of the film:

> You've changed me. You've changed the king I'll be, and the land we'll live in. Now if it comes to a fight, some of us might not see the sunset, but that is the true nature of war. But know this, I see now in your eyes what Scotland can be. You've felt her fear and her rage, you've heard the roar of her soul. You've wept her tears and you've shed her blood and you have touched the cold, cruel skin of her death. We have known Scotland clutched in the grip of a mighty hand, and now we'll set her free. Is that not worth fighting for?

The individuals are here explicitly identified with the nation, their being merged into its being, their own emotions, shed tears, wounds and grief identified with those of the nation as such, and which are made the basis for action, for unity around a single political goal. This identification is strengthened by the fact that the secondary protagonist is after all named Scott. The character who initially resents but comes to support and ultimately die for Bruce and the nation is surely not so named by accident. Scott is the stand-in for the Scot, any Scot, his identity merged with and standing for that of the nation.

In conclusion, we can see that Bildhauer's

generic criteria for medieval film broadly hold up as applicable to this small corpus of films about Robert the Bruce. While not all of her posited characteristics of medieval film as a coherent object of study are equally present in all of the films, and without making any claims about medieval film *per se* beyond the scope of this discussion, her model is a useful one for comparing films within a corpus beyond the banal (they all feature bearded men with swords riding around on horses) or the merely pedantic (ranking them against each other by their fidelity to the historical record, and treating them as dramatic versions of what should really be "objective" documentaries). While the criticisms of her model cited above – chiefly that her criteria are common, but not sufficiently universal to be considered normative – are substantial and serious, I hope that the present study has shown it to be helpful for establishing points of comparison and for suggesting useful starting points for more interesting and substantial criticism of medieval film. Adopting a model such as Bildhauer's enables us to engage more usefully with filmmakers' choices about such things as narrative, characterisation, language, props, editing, costume, diagetic and non-diagetic music, and allusions to literary or other cultural artefacts outwith the film itself. It allows us to understand these as narrative and aesthetic choices, and assess them according to a logic of (purported) generic conventions, and being able to do so across a corpus of films enables us to interrogate those conventions *qua* genre conventions as well. In moving away from the more restrictive approach of assessing medieval films primarily by their fidelity to the historical record – though this is still a valuable element of medieval film criticism – the model enables better criticism of them as works of art.

APPENDIX: *EPISODE DES GUERRES DE L'INDEPENDENCE ECOSSAISE 1314*, DIR. ROMAIN COOLUS (1911)

The earliest film about Robert the Bruce known to me is this French production from the silent era, directed by Romain Coolus and starring Paul Capellani as Bruce. Unfortunately, just a minute and a half of this film is known to survive, and in its present fragmentary state it is not possible to undertake a proper analysis of the film with respect to Bildhauer's criteria. A copy of the surviving material taken from a Dutch release of the film, and with intertitles in Dutch, is the only known extant portion of the film, and a copy of this is held at the National Library of Scotland.[3] However, from what has been preserved in the film and from a short contemporary French synopsis cited in the NLS's catalogue (NLS, Reference number 4416) at least one and possibly two of her generic characteristics of medieval film can be identified.

The one we can actually see from the surviving footage is the suspicion of the written word because of its vulnerability to interception and manipulation. In the extant fragment, Bruce writes a letter to his queen, telling her to keep her courage and that he is gathering his forces to continue his war. He uses his dog as a messenger, sending it to the castle where Elizabeth is. She is

3 I am grateful to the staff of the NLS for facilitating my viewing of this film fragment.

finely dressed and does not appear to be a captive, but she is in the power of John of Lorne and his men, and while she initially greets the dog and the letter it bears with delight, she is interrupted by a soldier who summons his companions and their leader (presumably John of Lorne) leashes the dog, which he will use to track down Bruce.

The synopsis, translated in the NLS catalogue, includes the following:

> Robert Bruce, who has managed to flee to his rural refuge but is completely deserted and desperate, witnesses Comyn the Red in a hallucination and putting aside his resentment in order to save the common cause decides to do battle with Comyn [? recte: Edward] once again.

As Comyn has seemingly already been killed at this point, his appearance to Bruce in a hallucination would in a literal sense be out of linear time, but little more than that can be said in the absence of the footage itself.

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‘The Joke of Wellington’: The Duke of Wellington’s cone from folk act to brand

Joel Conn

> They called him the Iron Duke. His armies defeated Napoleon and saved Europe from tyranny. So how did Glasgow reward the Duke of Wellington? They put a traffic bollard on his statue’s head. (Leask 2005)

In the city centre of Glasgow stands Royal Exchange Square and within it the Gallery of Modern Art (known as the GoMA). The gallery is housed in a 1778 ‘Tobacco Lords’ mansion house (Bowers 2005: 11) and, since 1844, in front stands an equestrian statute of the Duke of Wellington by Carlo Marochetti (Nisbet). It is only one of Glasgow’s many impressive statues but Marochetti’s Wellington has achieved a greater fame as being the statue with the traffic cone hat, now being Glasgow’s most recognisable landmark (see Image 1). After a long period of official condemnation of the practice, the coned statue and the act of coning has become an accepted part of Glasgow life, with the Duke and cone featuring prominently in information about the city and in art works, humour, and in advertising and branding.

In this article I will focus on the history of the Duke’s cone, and how the attitude of the city (both the people and the city authorities) has developed until the practice has become an informal emblem for Glasgow. In an attempt to avoid an article of collectanea, I shall further consider the cone in the wider context of similar public interactions.

1: Looking north from Queen Street at Duke of Wellington with cone (and seagull) and the front entrance of Gallery of Modern Art, Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow (photographed 12 September 2022)

HISTORY OF THE CONE

Some attribute the custom of placing the cone on Wellington’s head to the 1980s (Leask 2005; BBC 2005) but I spoke with one informant who

said they had spoken to people claiming to have clambered up in the 1970s. Certainly the practice has been in existence since the late 1990s, as I cannot remember a time in my adult life when cones were not, at least infrequently, placed on the statue.

Public and official condemnation of the custom can be traced at least to 2000 when Greater Glasgow & Clyde Valley Tourist Board were said to have removed 'the cone off the statue because we felt it would clutter up the shots' being taken for promotional material (Daily Record 2000). This led to a battle of soundbites between local politicians. Alex Mosson, the then-Lord Provost of Glasgow, said:

> The statue of Wellington has become famous for the cone on its head. The image typifies the unique mixture of culture and humour Glasgow has to offer. After all, the humour of the Glasgow people is the city's greatest selling point (*Ibid.*)[1]

A previous Lord Provost, Pat Lally, however agreed with the Tourist Board's actions, saying: 'Glaswegians are sick of the sight of cones… I'm not sure that it does a lot for the people of Glasgow' (BBC 2000(b)).

The official line remained anti-coning for the next few years and an early satirical response replicated this. An unconed Duke featured in the 2001 Hogmanay Special of the Scottish sketch comedy show, *Chewin the Fat*, with two of the characters – the Banter Boys – about to apply a traffic cone before being chased off by a policeman who threatens them with 'spending… Ne'er Day in a tiny cell' if they climbed the statue (Chewin the Fat). In early 2005 the local authority, Glasgow City Council, 'issued a reminder that the placing of the cone constitutes… an act of vandalism' and were said 'to be taking a tougher stance on the unsanctioned decoration'. The reason given was 'not only because of the damage that could be caused to the statue itself, but of the harm that could come to someone if they fell off'. At the same time, the local police gave a weak warning that anyone caught climbing on the statue (whether in the act of coning or, presumably, otherwise) 'could face prosecution' but that 'each individual incident would have to be treated on its own merits'. It was said that the statue had already lost spurs and half of the sword 'as a result of pranksters trying to scale the structure' (BBC 2005). Charles Gordon, the then-council leader, said: '[P]erhaps the joke has worn a bit thin. It is a minor act of vandalism…I don't think anyone, drunk or sober, should be encouraged to climb up on the statue. It's dangerous' (Stewart 2005). This tougher policy apparently lasted less than a year as by December 2005 a new City Council leader, the 'youthful' Steven Purcell, was said to 'still see... the funny side of the prank' and the cone was by then 'on many postcards, T-shirts and travel guide covers, and ha[d] even featured in an *Evening Times* [newspaper] advertising campaign' (Leask 2005).

As Glasgow entered the dying days of the Cool Britannia period, there always seemed to be a cone on the Duke's head, though Glasgow City Council had not yet surrendered in the battle of the cone, utilising the strategy of 'a high powered water jet… used to wash the cones off the statue'

on many mornings (at least according to one blogger: Matthews 2007). The cone was already serving as a tourist attraction and local comment would bemoan any occasion that the cone was missing. The Glasgow comedian Limmy, in one of his early short films in 2007, pretended to be a visiting east coaster and filmed the (unconed) statue while complaining he had come all the way to Glasgow to see the cone but 'there's nae bloody cone on the heid, aeh… Just pretty gutted, eh' (*Cone*). By 2008, Lonely Planet listed Glasgow as one of the top 100 cities to see in the world, with the statue mentioned as a site to visit (Nicoll 2008), and in 2011 they upgraded the Duke to one of the top 1000 sites to see in the world, as part of a top 100 of 'the world's strangest tourist destinations' (Evening Times 2011).

September 2011 saw a significant adoption of the tradition by officialdom with a mobile phone 'app' called *Glasgow Cone Challenge* issued by the Glasgow City Marketing Bureau as part of its 'Glasgow with Style' campaign. The now-defunct game required users to flick cones onto the statue's head (Swain 2011). Promoted with the tag line: 'Don't put a real cone on the Duke's head, play the game instead!', the Bureau asserted that coning was 'a reflection of the city's irreverent sense of humour and its ability not to take authority too seriously' (Glasgow City Marketing Bureau 2011).

During this time, little comment was received from heritage organisations or commentators. An early Jeremiah was art historian Gary Nisbet who decried the 'vandalism' and the 'hypocrisy' of the public adoption of the image. He appears to be the first to popularise (if not coin) the term 'the Joke of Wellington' (Nisbet; Leask 2005) and argued that, even though 'Wellington was a bampot' this 'is an important, valuable, and beautiful statue which needs to be protected' (Herald 2005). The only other notable criticism from the art world was later added by Sandy Stoddart, then the Queen's sculptor in Scotland, who referred to the coning as 'the abuse of which Glasgow has taken to its heart like a class delinquent' (Stoddart 2012), that it was 'detestable', and the 'single most embarrassing thing about the culture of Glasgow' (Braiden 2013).

Official opposition to the practice thus remained in the early 2010s, despite the Council logging a meagre number of complaints each year[2]. The final official assault on the Field Marshall's bonnet came in 2013 when a plan was released by the Council proposing £65,000 of refurbishment works to the square, of which one part was raising the plinth to 1.8 meters high so as to deter all but the most dedicated climbers. The business case for the proposal stated:

> For more than 30 years the Wellington monument has been defaced by traffic cones, which regularly appear on the head of the horse or rider (and sometimes both) after the revelries of the weekend.
>
> This depressing image of Glasgow has sadly featured in posters and postcards depicting the city.
>
> Ironically, this unfortunate impression of the city has been supported by former Lord Provosts and chief executive and even adopted occasionally by the city marketing bureau.

The report claimed that 'the cost of removing these cones is conservatively put at £100 a time and the frequency is estimated at around 100 times a year'[3]. The report cited direct damage to the statue of 'paint… peeling, causing corrosion to the ironwork and hastening water damage' (all quotes from BBC 2013(c)).

The Council's proposal encountered a significant backlash, with the Council 'cone-demned' on social media and the target of Facebook campaigns, a petition, and many a punning quote (such as entreating the Council to 'Cony no dae that' to a practice which was 'i-cone-ic') (Haggerty 2013; BBC 2013(c)). The Council climbed down within days and an official spokesman for the politicians implied it was all the fault of unnamed bureaucrats: 'The wording of the report was appalling, and the [council leader] has instructed officers to withdraw the planning application' (BBC 2013(b)). A different part of the Council stood strong with a further spokesperson saying: 'Although many people like to see the cone, it is a risk. We will continue to remove it' (Gray 2013).

The forces massed against the Duke's cone finally met their Waterloo in Summer 2014 as a replica of the Duke with a glowing cone stood proudly as a centre-piece in Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony (ABC 2014). The centrality of His Grace's headgear to official branding for the city took off from there including: being an emblem for the city on the public hire bikes; a cartoon version of him (using his cone as a megaphone) being named the 'COP26 Head of Travel' in posters and videos about travel restrictions during the city's 2021 hosting of the huge international environmental conference (*COP26 Travel* 2021); and a 2024 adaptation of Visit Glasgow's *People Make Glasgow* campaign featuring a traffic cone hanging off the slogan: 'YOU MAKE GLASGOW The friendliest city in the world' (Visit Scotland 2024).

Recent criticism has not been of the cone, but the presence of the Duke himself. In 2021, Zandra Yeaman, communities and campaigns officer for the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights proposed that the Duke should be moved to a sculpture park, with other undesirable sculpture, as a project to develop a 'Museum of Slavery, Empire and Migration', saying: 'The Wellington Statue is an iconic image in Glasgow with the cone on its head that people are so proud of' but 'the friezes around the statue are images of him slaughtering South Asians, sacking Indian cities and it sits outside a slaver's house built off the back of enslaved African people'. SNP Councillor Graham Campbell was quoted in favour of leaving the Duke in place, as a symbol of anti-establishment protests: 'I think people have already shown how much respect they have for the Duke of Wellington by placing a cone on his head' (Brown 2020).

THE CONE IN ART, POPULAR CULTURE, COMMERCE AND FOLKLORE

Once firmly affixed as part of Glasgow's image and folk life for locals and visitors alike, the Duke and his cone have become a popular image on postcards and art works by many local artists, and dominate creative interaction with the city.

2: Mural 'Are Ye Dancin?' by Conzo and Globel (photographed 18 September 2022)

3: Entrance sign at Ibis Styles hotel, Mitchell Street, Glasgow (photographed 21 September 2019)

4: Mural at Mexican restaurant 'El Jefe's' at Fenwick Road/ Station Road, Giffnock, Glasgow (photographed 6 April 2023)

5: Advertising for Equi's ice cream in fish and chip shop, Fenwick Road, Giffnock, Glasgow (photographed 17 August 2024)

He has been a watercolour on *Scottish Field*'s 'The Glasgow Issue', peaked out of the corner of adverts for a National Theatre of Scotland performance, and had an Oor Wullie with cone temporarily installed next to him as part of a fundraising campaign by the Glasgow Children's Hospital Charity. The Duke adorns the front of hotels and murals, and he and his cone feature in adverts from banks to dairies. The Duke or just his cone are represented in multiple items for sale from replica statues to chocolate bars and shortbread boxes. You can purchase a custom Lego Duke with cone, Christmas tree baubles, or – within the foyer of GoMA – you can squash a penny and have the Duke and hat stamped onto your defaced coin. An early commercialisation was by a local lawyer, Philip Hannay, who copyrighted and trademarked 'The Glasgow Hat', being a traffic cone hat for sale in local gift shops (Rennie 2007)[4].

The image of an out-of-place traffic cone is so easily recognised, and strongly associated with the city, that its use has extended beyond mere reproductions and adaptations. A traffic cone alone, or simply a cone-shaped or orange-coloured object atop something, features regularly in advertising and art such as: a traffic cone hanging off a Charles Rennie Mackintosh chair in window decals from a local bus company; or the Duke wearing an orange sombrero in a mural outside a suburban Mexican restaurant. The most abstract is a local ice-cream manufacture's advertising which shows the head of Michelangelo's David wearing an inverted ice-cream cone. (Tables set out non-exhaustive lists of uses collected of the statute or a cone in: artistic creations and humour (Table 1); items available for sale (Table 2); and marketing and branding (Table 3) along with references and dates of my first collection. Also see Images 2 to 5 referred to therein.)

The same creative development applies to the cone itself. Once a matter of replacing one generic traffic cone by another (and perhaps adding an extra cone onto the head of the horse) now the cone is frequently decorated by local artists or by those seeking publicity for their product or cause. A gold cone was added to 'celebrate Scotland's success in Team GB' (Daily Record 2012) at the time that Royal Mail had been painting a postbox gold in the home town of each of Team GB's 2012 Olympic gold medalists (for instance, BBC 2012(a); BBC 2012 (b)). Within the last years there have been: European stars on a cone to mark Brexit; Santa bringing a Christmas tree cone; and a knitted cover in the colours of Ukraine's flag (see Image 6). The extension of corporate marketing directly onto the cone also commenced during this time, with cones marked with logos or flyers advertising an event or product (marked by a predictable social media outrage about a perceived commercialisation: Carmichael 2024). (Table 4 sets out a non-exhaustive list of collected non-standard cones and dressings, with references and dates.)

The cone has reached the stage of metaphor, standing for permanence or resilience in the midst of change or upheaval, such as in *The Guardian*'s report of the 2012 local government elections:

> In days gone by there were some certainties about Glasgow life. The Duke of Wellington

> statue always had a traffic cone on its head, Rangers Football Club was comfortably solvent, and Labour ran the magnificent 19th-century city chambers on George Square. (Crawford 2012).

and in this 2014 article on the city's response to a tragic crash days earlier:

> Glaswegians as a proud bunch. The things we value might not be the civic totems of other cities but we will defend our statue of the Duke of Wellington with the traffic cone on his head… until the bitter end. And when something grisly happens, like a bin lorry careening through a crowded, pre-Christmas shopping area, we have a strong sense of community to pull us through. (Burnside 2014)

Such is the quotidian certainty of the Duke's cone, *The Herald*'s diary writer noted social media worry in 2022 when the Duke was briefly seen without his cone: 'As you can imagine, the locals are not taking this desecration of a famous landmark lightly, and on social media a doom-laden prophesy is gloomily referenced: "If the Duke is unconed, no more tattie scones"' (Jackson 2022; see also Craig 2010 for an earlier similar comment by a local blogger). The cone has thus been portrayed as the Glaswegian equivalent of the Tower of London's ravens (Historic Royal Palaces) but this is not the only folklore (or fakelore) about the cone or its origins.[5]

A 2020 article detailed a 'bizarre conspiracy theory' that the Bristolian street-artist Banksy was the first coner, on the basis that some early Glasgow work appeared in the late 1990s and floating the possibility that Banksy was a resident or frequent visitor in the city in the

6: Ukraine flag decorated cone (photographed 8 March 2022)

1990s (Williams 2020(b)). (Banksy himself has placed the origins of the practice much earlier describing – in the introduction to his catalogue for his 2023 solo show at the GoMA – the statue as a 'masterpiece' that 'has had a cone on its head continuously for the past 40 odd years' (Banksy 2023: frontispiece).) A further legend for the origin of the cone is a debunking one: 'that famous image of the drunk clambering astride the horse to "crown" the Duke is merely a myth' (Yelp 2009) as it is always coned by the local authority itself. As one 2011 poster recounts:

> One morning, when I was having a coffee and a smoke at Costa in the square, looking at the statue, I saw a council works van with a crane on it pull up, blocking half the traffic down Queen Street. A pair of council workers in hi-vis jackets got up in the crane next to the (at that point unconed) duke, plonked a fresh traffic cone atop his head, took a promotional photo of it for the council to demonstrate what a fun and happening place Glasgow was, then yanked it off, got in the van and left, leaving a rather amused-looking crowd. (Montag 2011)

A migratory legend applied to the statue (migratory both in location and artwork) is a version of a 'suicidal artist' legend that has the statue's sculptor, Marochetti, committing suicide 'when he noticed that he had forgotten to include the spurs on his equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington', which spurs are more commonly reported as having been 'broken off in a later act of vandalism' (Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 156-157).

INTERACTION WITH STATUARY

Other examples from Glasgow and Edinburgh

Interacting with, or placing items onto, city statues is not unique to Glasgow, and Wellington is not unique in Glasgow city centre. There is a former practice of trying to throw stones into the outstretched hat held by the statue of James Oswald MP in George Square (see Image 7). In 1898, Para Handy author Neil Munro is said to have accompanied a visiting Joseph Conrad around Glasgow and told him that, if he successfully had his 'chuckie' go into the hat, he would become an 'honorary Glaswegian'. Conrad

7: Statue of James Oswald MP, George Square, Glasgow, wearing a cone (photographed 16 January 2024)

is said to have persisted until he achieved this (Lendrum 2004: 85).

More recently, after the late Labour politician, Donald Dewar – the 'father' of the modern Scottish Parliament – was honoured in 2002 with a statue at the top of Buchanan Street in Glasgow, this likeness was quickly subjected to people climbing up and decorating it. Early on a cone was reported as having been placed on his head (Brown 2002) but further types of dressing were noted, such as 'a single red rose on the plinth' with a brief romantic note (*Ibid.*) as well as 'a packet of

Polo Mints… placed in his hands, clasped behind his back' but thereafter '[g]raffiti, including gang slogans,… started to appear on the torso, … [t]he most recent, and prominent, is of the CND symbol on each jacket lapel and "no war" on the tie'. A commentator regarded this later development as inappropriate, saying the polo mints 'was a funny, slightly irreverent, yet well-meaning gesture in keeping with the humour of the citizens of Mr Dewar's native city' but that the other items 'demean[ed] Mr Dewar's reputation and that of his city' (Herald 2003). The official response was to place Dewar's statue on a higher, smoother pedestal but his prominent perch at the top of a major shopping street, near a rallying point for protesters and speakers, means the statue is still occasionally coned (as are many other statues in the city) but Mr Dewar also receives more overt political decoration such as the chimpanzee mask and a sign reading 'No More Monkey Business' shown in Image 8. No grand theory can be devised as to which Glaswegian statues are coned (or otherwise interacted with) or why, but cones and other items rarely remain for any duration on any other statue, and no statue has a constant succession of the same item like the cones on the Duke of Wellington.

Since the 2010s, cones have appeared with some frequency in Edinburgh, with reports of them on: the Duke of Wellington statue in front of Register House on Princes Street (Gemmill 2013), a golf ball statue in Musselburgh (East Lothian News 2014), and David Hume on the Royal Mile (Pooran 2019; Williamson 2021). David Hume is also the subject of a different

8: Statue of Donald Dewar MP, dressed as part of environmental protest, Buchanan Street, Glasgow (photographed 15 June 2022)

form of interaction, with members of the public reaching up to rub his outstretched right toe. It was said to 'have started as a local tradition by philosophy students' but was now more generally adopted by those 'believing [it]… will bring luck or knowledge' (McMahon 2022). Within 350 metres of Hume's toe, the rubbing of the nose of the statue of Greyfriars Bobby on George IV Bridge caused controversy after a 2013 'nose job' failed within two days (BBC 2013(a)). Again, 'luck' was cited as the reason for the practice of rubbing, with tourists rather than students regarded as the culprits. In this case, the local authority announced that it had no further plans to restore the small statue and simply asked

people to forego rubbing, but said that if they felt 'obliged to rub Bobby's nose [the Council]… encourage[d] them to do it gently' (BBC 2014).

STATUARY INTERACTION ELSEWHERE

Due to limitations of space, a complete listing of all recent forms of interaction with statuary in other towns and cities across the world is not possible[6] but three examples represent traditions of deposition of objects, themed decoration, and unintentional damage which aspects can all be seen with the Duke of Wellington.

Remaining in the UK, Antony Gormley's commanding 20-metre-tall 'Angel of the North' in Gateshead has both been hatted and shirted. A team of abseilers donned it with a Santa hat (then removed days later by one dressed as the Grinch) in 2018 (ITV 2018(b)), and within its first year of being erected – 1998 - it was dressed with a giant Newcastle United shirt using 'fishing line, rubber balls and catapults' (BBC 1998) in an act that the sculptor himself described as 'extraordinary' and a sign to him that 'now the Angel is being accepted' by the local population (ITV 2018(a)).

More personal interaction occurs on and around the Angel. At the base of the statue is much graffiti, which can only be seen up close. It is predominantly tagging of names and initials, some appearing romantic and some marking visits. Separately, at the side of the statue's base, in a 'scrubby copse of alder trees… is a spontaneous, secret garden of memories' where the public has placed 'photographs, folder and unfolded notes, straggles of ribbon, baubles, garlands, plastic butterflies' and other items, all now in various stages of becoming 'weather-ravaged' (Brown 2023). The theme of angels is understandably dominant. The statue's interpretation boards refer to part of the artist's vision as an angel watching over while miners toiled beneath the surface, and it is easy to understand the emotional attraction of feeling that the Angel of the North is overlooking the memorials to loved ones.[7] Gateshead Council, who manage the area, adopt a pragmatic approach. In regard to the graffiti, there is 'very limited' attempt to remove the graffiti as '[i]t is very difficult to remove unless caught before it has been absorbed and dried' into the steel, but they seek to remove it quickly if the graffiti is 'offensive'. Regarding the memorial garden, the Council confirmed that it 'is completely unofficial and has been on going for many years' but given 'the sensitivity of this area [the Council has]... thus far has been reluctant to remove' it (personal correspondence, 8 August 2022).

In regard to themed dressing up of statues, an obvious analogue is Brussels' Manneken-Pis. He is dressed for around half the year, with the costume changes undertaken by an organisation who schedule it all in advance (City of Brussels). The outfits may celebrate an occasion – religious or secular – and often have a political message such as World AIDS Day or Pride month, or dressed in a Union Jack waistcoat ahead of Brexit (so a mirror of the Duke's European flag cone). There is an official process for offering costumes to the organisation for acceptance, and a museum of costumes previously worn. Despite the highly organised system for the statue's dressing, it is still seen as representative of a specifically Bruxelloise

semi-sarcastic sense of humour which is called *zwanze* (CNRTL). (There is a parallel with many seeing the Duke's cone as representing a Glaswegian sense of humour and mockery of the powerful.)

Finally, as a further example of an invented tradition resulting in public interaction to the point of damage, in Verona, Italy, a practice developed of rubbing the right breast of a 1970s statue of Shakespeare's Juliet which was 'meant to bring good fortune for those who are unlucky in love, but… ha[d] left it looking decidedly the worse for wear', resulting in a replica being installed in 2014 at a cost of €20,000. The local authorities had further sought since 2012 to levy 'heavy fines' on 'tourists who were leaving sentimental notes stuck to the brick walls of the courtyard [where the statue sits], often using wads of chewing gum' (Squires 2014).

POLITICAL INTERACTION

The destruction and defacing of images for religious or political purposes has ancient antecedents, and literal iconoclasm continues to date, such as the 2020 the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol during a Black Lives Matter protest (for which four protesters were charged with criminal damage, but then acquitted by the jury: see BBC 2022(b)).

Less destructive political actions have included: the grass Mohawk given to Winston Churchill during London's 2000 'May Day Riots' (BBC 2000(a)); red paint thrown over a statue of Churchill in Edmonton, Canada in 2021 in connection with the treatment of First Nations children in residential schools (CBC 2022); and two women convicted of malicious mischief after smearing jam and porridge over a bust of Queen Victoria in Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in a 2024 protest about food insecurity (BBC 2024).

VANDALISM AS A TRADITION

Defacement of a space or property can become a traditional or folkloric act. Folklorist Ian Brodie has studied the Sydney River Trestle Bridge, in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia that, for around 40 years, it has been graffitied and counter-graffitied as part of a rivalry between two high schools and as a rite of passage on graduation. Those carrying out the painting see themselves as undertaking a traditional practice and, in response to attempts to halt the practice, a number of 2010 designs specifically referred to such, including 'THIS Tradition NEVER ENDS' painted on the bridge's southwest retaining wall (Brodie 2017).

An entirely different form of damage – to a farmer's crop undertaken by crop circle creators – has been considered as a 'new folk tradition of temporal "art events"' (Roberts 1999: 81). Although splits in perception of the Duke's cone or the Sydney River Trestle Bridge can be seen between it being a 'tradition' or 'vandalism', with crop circles the split in perception is more broad. Those who recognise the marks in the field as the work of crop circle makers see an artistic creation, but some dispute the authorship of the creators and see the work as having a supernatural origin and significance (Roberts 1999: 97).

CONCLUSIONS

It is tempting to see the folk act of depositing of a traffic cone – being a mundane everyday object of the modern age – as a secularised development from dressing of wells or of religious statuary. If so, it sits in parallel with such dressing and deposition of votive objects which remains present in modern life (such as 'cloutie' (rags) wells and trees (Westwood and Kingshill 2009: 44)[8]). The development of the memorial garden next to the 'Angel of the North', and many similar roadside memorials, shows that any location where a person finds a meaning can lead to a site of deposition of objects.

The deposition of the cone can create its own meaning. Two informants from my research[9] admitted to having re-coned the Duke during their student days (in the 1990s) if they found him bare-headed. Both referred to a desire to maintain the tradition that the Duke should wear a cone[10]. Thus a sense of tradition may give meaning to our impulse to do stupid things when drunk or excited (such as climbing a statue or graffitiing a bridge).

The cone's political meaning can be over-stated. The statue itself, erected after an underwhelming request for public subscription, was overtly political. It has been described as part of a 'Tory project' of 'Unionist Nationalism' (Cookson 2004: 23-27) but such specific political intentions now seem lost to those interacting with the Duke, as the act of coning does not appear to have any particular political bias. Art critic Tom Denman draws a direct connection between public monuments and political dissent, stating '[f]or every monument these is a riot waiting to happen. Implicit in every monument is the blood that isn't seen' resulting in a constant tension that invites 'righteous riotousness' to spill forth (Denman 2023: 10). Thus to Denman the Duke is not unique, as all statues invite 'riotous' political interaction.

Denman's view of Wellington's cone is, however, that it has become a 'humorous manifestation of the permanent riot' but has been co-opted and the 'riot is now a ghost of itself… absorbed into the ideologies of commerce and power promoted by the very monument that the cone originally poked fun at' (ibid.: 11). Such a view merges into the general consensus that the Duke's cone simply illustrates 'the city's irreverent sense of humour and its ability not to take authority too seriously' (Glasgow City Marketing Bureau 2011). Such a representation of a city's humour is also not unique, as we see with the Bruxelloise explanation of *zwanze* for the Mannekin-Pis. Further, like the Mannekin-Pis' formal committee and rules for dressing, the cone has only flourished with the involvement of the local authorities who, through not pressing for prosecution of those who undertake it and tolerating a degree of damage, acknowledge that the public's attitude to the act has a greater significance.

With no unique quality found in the act of applying mundane objects to a statue, political interaction with a public statue, or in the interpretation that such acts show a city's humour and irreverence, what accounts for the dominant position of the Duke of Wellington's cone? It may be an ease of recognition combined with Glasgow's lack of something better. Despite its grand archi-

tecture and history, the city has no single building or structure that is instantly recognisable as Glasgow. Further, there is no single institution that represents and binds all Glaswegians. Indeed, the city is divided by certain institutions, such as its football teams. The Duke of Wellington's cone provides a unifying image that is not subject to copyright, and is easily emulated and portrayed[11]. It is both related to the city's grandeur but also represents its people's interaction with that grandeur. As an outlet for political statement it is malleable, accessible and tolerated. Finally, there never seems to be a shortage of available cones on Glasgow's roads.

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Table 1: Uses of the statute or a cone in artistic creations and humour

Description	***Creator***	***Source***	***First seen or reported***
Watercolour cover of Scottish Field's 'The Glasgow Issue' showing statue with cone, from rear	Scottish Field (magazine)	(Scottish Field 2018)	August 2018
Social media (April Fool's) post of Dippy the Dinosaur with a traffic cone on his head	Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery	(Evening Times 2011)	1 April 2019
Oor Wullie statue with cone hat in Royal Exchange Square ('Oor Wee Yin's Banter')	Rachael Tidmore (artist) for Glasgow Children's Hospital Charity 'Oor Wullie's Bucket Trail'	Viewed in person	8 July 2019
Child's Halloween party costume for primary school of her as Duke on horse, wearing road cone	Child's parent	Viewed viral Facebook post	22 October 2019
Lego recreation of Duke with cone	Stephen O'Neil (artist)	Viewed on website shop	26 October 2019
Carved pumpkin of Duke with cone at Glasglow event, as part of installation of carved pumpkins	Event's creators	Viewed in person	28 October 2019
Panda in kilt, wearing traffic cone on market stall selling bamboo brushes	Stall holder?	Viewed in person (Royal Exchange Square, adjacent to statue)	1 December 2019
Darth Vader, riding an AT-AT, both with traffic cones on head	Unknown	Viewed viral Facebook post	23 February 2020
Meme of 'A rare painting of the duke of Wellington in battle' (Adaption of Robert Alexander Hillingford's 'Wellington at Waterloo' (1815) with traffic cone superimposed on Wellington's head)	Unknown	Viewed viral Facebook post	1 October 2020

Meme that a 'mysterious monolith has now appeared in George Square' (metal monolith, as had then-recently been found in USA, with traffic cone on top)	Scottish Banter (Facebook page)	Viewed viral Facebook post	3 December 2020
Meme of Princes William and Harry at statue of Princess Diane, superimposed with William holding a cone and saying to Harry: 'C'mon! They do it in Glasgow all the time'	Unknown	Viewed viral Facebook post	3 July 2021
MS Paint painting of Cher riding with Duke with cone along shopping street, as part of a series called 'No context advent calendar'	Jim'll Paint It (artist)	Viewed Facebook post	12 December 2021
Mural of upper half of Duke with cone, hugging a Tunnock's Tea Cake, with wording 'Are Ye Dancin?'	Conzo and Globel (artists)	Viewed in person (lane to rear of Argyll Arcade, leading to Sloans Bar). See Image 2.	18 September 2022
Meme with picture of King Charles' coronation and words: 'If the coronation was in Glasgow'. The King has a giant traffic cone placed on his head instead of a crown.	Tweet by @gavmacn	Viewed as viral social media post (in week following coronation)	9 May 2023
Street art of stick figure wearing kilt, with traffic cone on head and wording: 'Anyone seen my horse'.	The Fart of Wanksy' (part of counter-graffiti seen in city during the Banksy exhibition at GoMA)	Viewed in person (Miller Street)	23 June 2023
Silver plaque, placed opposite Duke, with humorous explanation of the 'Ancient Tradition Behind The Cones on Glasgow's Statues' including claims of hundreds of years of history including using haggis skins to compete for a chieftain's daughter's hand in marriage (which are later replaced by traffic cones). Part of a series of plaques allegedly placed throughout city as part of a 'Glaikit Guide to Glasgow'	Glaikit.scot	Viewed in person	8 October 2024

Christmas tree topped with a traffic cone photographed from outside tenement flat (Great Western Road)	Non-public post by Facebook friend	Viewed as Facebook post	7 December 2024
Mural with reproduction of 1930s Guiness advert featuring an ostrich that has swallowed a pint of Guiness, but with addition of traffic cone on head of ostrich	Unknown artist but adjacent to Malones Irish Bar	Viewed in person (Sauchiehall Lane)	21 December 2024
Sticker saying "Hello Your Name is Not the Duke of Wellington" with portrait of Wellington wearing a traffic cone bearing the Glasgow coat of arms	Artist signed as "nicollage_kg"	Viewed in person (stuck to object in George Square)	9 January 2025
Sticker of someone on Duke statue being handed up a traffic cone	Artist unknown	Viewed in person (stuck to gate on Hill Street)	29 March 2025

Table 2: Duke or cone items on sale

Description	***Creator/ Supplier***	***Source***	***First seen or reported***
'The Glasgow Hat' (traffic cone shaped hat)	Philip Hannay	(Rennie 2007)	2007
Multiple prints, paintings, coasters, magnets	Various	Seen in shops and markets	Collected from 2012 onwards
Hand-painted Christmas tree bauble 'decorated with images of the iconic Duke of Wellington "Glasgow Style"' (ie statue with cone on head)	The Olde Christmas Shoppe.co.uk	Viewed on website	12 December 2021
Clothing (various t-shirts, shirts, jackets and jumpers) featuring with small logo at breast of Duke with cone; also small plushie of 'Duke with his cone'	AlbanyClothing.co.uk (Duke with cone is also logo on website)	Viewed on website	3 June 2022
Gallery of Modern Art squashed penny with Duke with cone	Machine in foyer of GoMA	Viewed in person	2 July 2022
1) Chocolate bars with photograph of Duke with cone on wrapper 2) Small replica statue of Duke with cone called 'Coneheid Glasgow'	Souvenir/ sweet shop on Trongage	Viewed in person	25 March 2023
Traffic cone as part of Scottish-themed illustrations on box of 'Jock's Travels' shortbread	Deans Scottish All Butter Shortbread	Viewed in person in supermarket	4 September 2023
Whisky bottles with domed section in base containing miniature statue of Duke with cone (various sizes)	Scotch whisky shop on Gordon Street	Viewed in person in shop window	10 November 2023
Irn-Bru margarita offered for sale in local bar, named 'The Banksy', and advertised by drawing of the cocktail with a miniature traffic cone hanging off a straw	Max's Bar	Viewed in person in bar (Queen Street)	11 January 2024
Socks with traffic cone logo as part of 'Big City Glasgow' set. (Also sell traffic cone magnets and key chains)	Big City Collectables	Owned by spouse	21 January 2024
Prints featuring a traffic cone with a tiny Duke of Wellington on top	Jord.art	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	13 July 2024

Table 3: Use of Duke or cone (or variation) in branding and marketing

Description	***Advertiser/Event/ Location***	***Source***	***First seen or reported***
Advertising poster including words: 'You Are Glasgow' and 'It may be pelting down roughly 170 days a year but between Macintoshes and Traffic Cone Hats, you're well covered'	HSBC (bank)	Viewed in person (as bus stop sign, Great Western Road)	19 January 2019
Decal on side of escalator of Duke with cone	Buchanan Galleries (shopping mall)	Viewed in person	22 August 2019
Advertising post with image of Duke with cone	Zoek.uk (job vacancies website)	Viewed in person (as sign in Kelvinbridge underground station)	12 September 2019
Mural of Duke with road cone embedded, as part of welcome sign at front of hotel	Ibis Styles (hotel)	Viewed in person (Mitchell Street). See Image 3.	21 September 2019
Duke with cone as part of window decals for souvenir shop	I ♥ Glasgow (shop)	Viewed in person (Sauchiehall Street)	5 October 2019
Duke with cone as window decal for souvenir shop, plus cone hanging off ♥ in shopfront signage	We ♥ Glasgow (shop)	Viewed in person (Queen Street)	5 October 2019
Line drawing of Duke and cone on rental bike decoration	Nextbike (rental bicycles)	Viewed in person (Queen Street)	7 December 2019
Stylised image of Celine Dion wearing traffic cone on head advertising Eurovision-themed club night	Ne Party Pas Sans Moi (event)	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	10 January 2020
Sculpture of upturned traffic cone on its side, with illuminated ? in base, as centrepiece to shoe shop	size? (shop)	Viewed in person (Royal Exchange Square, adjacent to statue)	13 March 2020

Advertising post with photograph of Duke with cone including words: 'Glasgow: the only place in the world where a traffic cone on the head of a statue is totally normal and an important part of the city's identity'	University of Strathclyde	Viewed on viral Facebook post	17 October 2020
Advertising post by mobile phone company showing two Dukes with cones (one more filled in than the other) comparing advertiser's coverage to their competitors	EE	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	29 June 2021
Information campaign (posters, social media posts, billboards, videos) for COP26 featuring the Duke as 'Head of Travel', wearing cone which he uses as a megaphone	COP26 organisers (international conference)	Viewed throughout city and online; (*COP26 Travel* 2021)	In advance of and during event (23 October to 14 November 2021)
Advertising poster featuring horse with cone peaking in from side and including words: 'Big on milk as Scottish as seeing a statue with a traffic cone on it'	Lidl (supermarket)	Viewed in person (as bus stop sign, Argyll Street)	18 September 2022
Colourful decal of Duke with cone on buses. Also same image on promotional material for tour buses.	CitySightseeing Glasgow (tourist bus company)	Viewed in person	21 September 2022
Billboard poster with milk bottle with traffic cone on top advertising delivery service	McQueens Dairies (dairy)	Viewed in person (Fenwick Road, Giffnock)	30 January 2023
Advertising post by comedy festival, with traffic cone hanging off top of festival logo (GICF)	Glasgow International Comedy Festival	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	13 February 2023
Advertising banners including small outline of Duke's head with cone	Glasgow Film Festival	Viewed in person (Buchanan Street)	20 February 2023

Advertising mural featuring Duke with cone reclining in cinema seat, with speech bubble: 'Switch aff your phone!'	Vue Cinemas	Viewed in person (outside entrance to cinema, St Enoch shopping mall)	4 March 2023
Mirror in charity shop with traffic cone painted on, encouraging customers to take a selfie of themselves and post it to social media with charity's hashtag	Shelter (housing charity)	Viewed in person (pop up shop, Glasgow Central train station)	11 March 2023
Mural of Duke wearing an orange sombrero, outside Mexican restaurant	El Jefe's (restaurant)	Viewed in person (Fenwick Road/ Station Road, Giffnock). See Image 4.	6 April 2023
Advertising post by social enterprise café featuring Duke with cone	Social Bite (café)	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	3 May 2023
Billboard poster with man using a traffic cone as a megaphone, advertising 'Scotland's New Lottery!'	The Scotto (lottery company)	Viewed in person (Fenwick Road, Giffnock)	13 September 2023
HMV logo (Nipper the dog) wearing a traffic cone, part of in-store shop sign	HMV	Viewed in person (Argyll Street)	25 October 2023
Advertising post for website promoting skills training, featuring Duke with cone	TheSkillsNetwork.com	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	5 January 2024
Sticker of a traffic cone with a saltire flag and cow bell (for cycling clothing brand)	Rapha (sports clothing and accessory brand)	Viewed in person (stuck on item in Cochrane Street)	16 January 2024
Duke and cone as logo of Facebook group promoting Glasgow's heritage	Project Glasgow (Facebook page)	Viewed on Facebook	18 January 2024

Traffic cone painted onto reproduction of Old Master painting as part of 'Art Gone Wild' trail in Pollok Country Park	National Trust for Scotland	Viewed in person	3 March 2024
Painted sign of Duke with cone, holding branded coffee cup, outside café	Gordon Street Coffee	Viewed in person (Glasgow Central Station)	25 March 2024
Advertising post for website promoting 'tech expo' featuring Duke with cone including wording: 'When in Glasgow, dae as the Glaswegian'	Digit Tech News & Events	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	29 March 2024
Advertising campaign including traffic cone hanging off the slogan: 'YOU MAKE GLASGOW The friendliest city in the world'	Visit Scotland	Viewed in person (on advertising sign in underground train); (Visit Scotland 2024)	6 May 2024
Bus poster featuring Duke and cone on edge, advertising theatre show 'Dear Billy'	National Theatre for Scotland	Viewed in person (on bus seen on George Street)	21 May 2024
Large white horse with traffic cone placed on head, in home furnishing display at entrance to furniture showroom. Information sign refers to a Swedish tradition of carving horses.	Ikea	Viewed in person (Ikea, Paisley)	13 July 2024
Advertising poster for crypto and blockchain conference, featuring photograph of Duke with cone	Blockstart (event)	Viewed in person (poster stuck to bus shelter on Fenwick Road, Giffnock)	7 August 2024
Advertising decal in window of closed store. Glasgow spelled out in decorated letters. L is a Mackintosh ladder-back chair with a traffic cone hanging off top.	McGill's (bus company)	Viewed in person (window of former Watts Brothers on corner of Bath Street and Hope Street)	10 August 2024

Branding for local ice-cream manufacturer showing the head of Michelangelo's David wearing an ice-cream cone, with wording: 'Scottish craft with an Italian accent'	Equi's (ice-cream manufacturer)	Viewed in person (fish and chip shop, Fenwick Road, Giffnock). See Image 5. Subsequently seen at other retailers.	17 August 2024
Stylised line drawing of Duke, with traffic cone embedded into surface, as part of Glasgow-themed design in First Class waiting lounge	Avanti West Coast (train operator)	Viewed in person (Glasgow Central Station)	30 August 2024
Logo for grilled cheese and bread food purveyor, housed in a former police box. Logo is a police box, covered in melted cheese, surmounted by a traffic cone	Cheese Box (food purveyor)	Viewed in person (Wilson Street)	23 September 2024
Bar/ restaurant named 'The Iron Duke' with window decal of Duke with cone	The Iron Duke (bar/restaurant)	Viewed in person (Royal Exchange Square, in view of statue)	7 October 2024
Advertising poster for Latin music party, featuring a Latin American-style equestrian statue wearing a traffic cone, standing on a speaker stack	Latin Christmas (event)	Viewed in person (poster stuck to window of closed restaurant, Sauchiehall Street)	7 December 2024
Window decals featuring outline of Duke and cone for food retailer outlet in train station	Marks & Spencers	Viewed in person (Glasgow Queen Street station)	9 December 2024

MSP's Christmas card using a winning design from a competition amongst primary school pupils. Features an outline of the Duke and horse, with Duke wearing a Santa hat	Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP	Viewed in Facebook post by MSP	24 December 2024
Logo of Italian restaurant showing a caricatured restauranteur holding two bottles of Italian wine and wearing a traffic cone on his head	Laz Italian (restaurant)	Viewed in person (Bath Street)	31 December 2024
Logo featuring Duke with traffic cone	The Bell (online newspaper)	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	9 February 2025
Logo of a fox wearing a traffic cone on its head, on a sticker	Rogue Aura (men's hair and skin care products)	Viewed in person (stuck on traffic light control in Bath Street)	20 January 2025
Bar sign featuring Duke on a blue horse wearing a green cone (perhaps signifying Rangers and Celtic respectively)	Tennent's Bar (Tennent lager)	Viewed in person (Glasgow Airport)	29 January 2025
Logo of a traffic cone in front of a pixelated explosion background	Big City Festival (taking place in Kelvingrove Park in August 2025)	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	11 February 2025
Advertisement for performance of a band on tour to Glasgow, wearing traffic cones on their heads	Gnome (band)	Viewed on sponsored Facebook post	28 February 2025
Traffic cones on price list and mini traffic cone on a rugby ball and other items in window display (advertising showings of Six Nations games)	Drouthy's (bar)	Viewed in person (Queen Street, in view of statue)	3 March 2025

Table 4: Non-standard or themed cones or dressing

Design	***Source***	***First seen or reported***
Heart of Midlothian FC soccer club draped around Duke's neck (at the time of the team having cup match in Glasgow)	(Smith 2006)	16 May 2006
Gold cone to celebrate Olympic results. Likely added by local radio DJs.	(Daily Record 2012)	10 August 2012
Blue cone with 'Yes' logo and holding flag pole with 'Yes' flag	(The Herald 2014(b))	27 August 2014
Rainbow cone (for Glasgow Pride)	(GlasgowLive 2017)	23 August 2017
Lewis Capaldi mask placed on statue	(The National 2019)	16 May 2019
Cone decorated in green and pink stripes, with cartoon face. Designed by unknown artist.	Viewed in person	17 October 2019
Cone decorated with EU flag (for Brexit Day)	(The National 2020)	31 January 2020
White illuminated balloons physically tied around statue, with branding 'Let there be light'. Attributed to advertising campaign by Tennents lager.	(Williams 2020(a))	7 February 2020
Black cone, with broad white strip featuring 'Black Lives Matter' logo	(Sabljak 2020)	7 June 2020
Decorated like a Christmas tree, including lights (placed up by coner dressed as Santa)	Viewed viral Facebook post; (Williams 2021)	21 December 2021
Crocheted yellow and blue cover for traffic cone (Ukraine flag), with yellow flowers out of top.	Viewed in person. See Image 6; (BBC 2022(a))	8 March 2022
'Mad dragon traffic cone' (green with pink dragon spiralling down). Designed by 'Kirsty'.	Viewed in person; (*This Artist Designed…* 2023)	19 September 2022
Black cone, topped by miniature Santa hat, with the words 'Voddy' vertically down cone in bright colours	Viewed in person	5 December 2023

Standard traffic cone with A4 posters stapled around it, advertising drama performance 'Looking for Laughs'	Viewed in person	12 August 2024
Cone wrapped with flyers for a music event.	(Carmichael 2024)	26 September 2024
Yellow cone with several round stickers affixed with logo: 'Voice for Dads' (podcast)	Viewed in person	25 November 2024

Endnotes

1 Mosson was later reported once to have refused to do a publicity shoot in front of GoMA unless a cone was put onto the statue's head (Stewart 2005).

2 'The local authority received seven complaints in 2010, two in 2011 and just one in each of 2012 and 2013. Complaints peaked in 2009, when 28 calls were taken.' (Herald 2014(a))

3 The cost is likely to come from staffing costs, and use of a cherry-picker to remove the cone (presumably to comply with a safe method of removal). For the alleged use of a cherry-picker in removals, see Gray 2013.

4 Mr Hannay's hats were then copied by cheaper knock-offs. After attempts to challenge the breaches of copyright, he eventually made the decision to stop trying to enforce his rights, rather than spend his time fighting all-comers (interview, Philip Hannay, 17 September 2022).

5 I recall a rumour around 25 years ago that the 'first student' to plant the cone had come forward to complain that he held copyright in the idea and wanted his share of the many uses of the image that were already prevalent. With no other reference to this rumour located, I am the sole 'informant' for this rumour.

6 In the UK these include: a road cone on Anteros's bow in Picadilly Circus, London (Sun 2021); painting of the toe and finger nails of the statues around the plinth of the Edward VII statue on Union Street, Aberdeen; items on the head of Edward III in Leeds City Square; the occasional dressing of the Captain Cook statue in Whitby; and the long standing student prank of trying to replace the sceptre of Henry VIII on Trinity College, Cambridge with a chair leg (BBC 2023).

7 Artistic and academic engagement in the memorial garden has come from Anne Whitehead, a professor at Newcastle University, who sought contact from families who had left memorials, and incorporated this into a work with a local sound artist, David de la Haye (Sounding The Angel 2024; Brown 2023).

8 Sophia Kingshill has also considered graffiti tagging as a modern 'folk practice', within a context that 'making your mark on your landscape is ancient practice' (Kingshill 2025).

9 Male, professional occupations, now 45-54, and university students in the mid-1990s and late 1990s respectively.

10 The 2001 *Chewin the Fat* sketch is near-contemporary to these two informants' recollections, and alludes to a similar sense of tradition, with the characters seeking to place the cone on the statue so as to be part of 'the banter' of Glasgow (Chewin the Fat).

11 It is more accurate to say that it is an image that is difficult to copyright. It would not engage intellectual property (IP) protections to take a photograph of the statue or paint it but the resultant artistic creation (the photograph or painting) could then be entitled to IP protection as a creative product. A commercial product involving the road cone (such as Mr Hannay's Glasgow Hat) could also potentially obtain IP protection, as could a business logo based on adding a traffic cone to an unusual product or which used an original drawing or rendering of the Duke and cone. In certain circumstances, traffic cone designs are also capable of IP protection and conceivably a cone manufacturer could take issue with an artistic reproduction of the Duke if it featured their distinctive cone design. (None appear yet to have done so.) I am obliged to Mr Hannay (the creator of the traffic-cone shaped 'Glasgow hat') for his comments on the copyrightablity (or not) of the cone and its image (but any errors in expression are my own). Further legal analysis may be found at Iljadica (2017: 64-67), including a consideration of whether the original act of applying the cone may have been capable of intellectual property protection, as well as IP issues where portrayals of the Duke may also take in any art works being displayed behind the statue outside the GoMA.

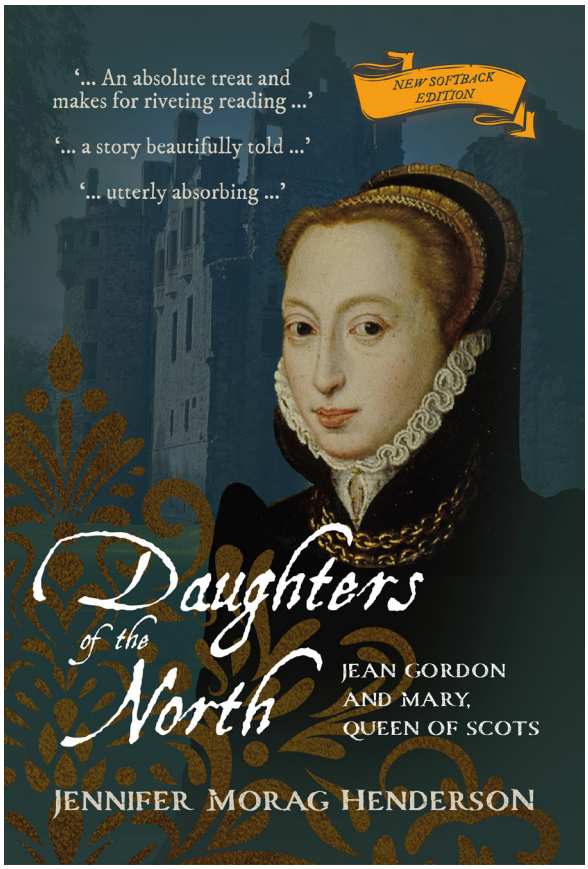
Daughters of the North: writing the biography of Jean Gordon and Mary, Queen of Scots

Jennifer Morag Henderson

Jean Gordon (1545-1629) is best remembered as the first wife of the Earl of Bothwell. Jean was Bothwell's alibi for the night of Darnley's murder, demonstrating her key position at the court of Mary, Queen of Scots, and involvement in many of the well-known events of Mary's reign. Bothwell then divorced Jean in order to marry Mary, Queen of Scots – the marriage that led to Mary's downfall. However, Jean did much more than play a supporting role in the drama of Mary, Queen of Scots: as the daughter of a man once known as 'the King of the North' she had played an important role since her childhood in the politics and alliances of the north-east of Scotland, while through her second marriage to the Earl of Sutherland she became the most powerful woman in the Far North. Moreover, Jean Gordon had huge personal agency: she was a woman in charge, overseeing industrial development and clan alliances at a time when the Highlands were largely overlooked – and historians have continued to overlook her contribution. And, intriguingly, Jean married three times, with the third marriage being to a man she had been in love with since she was a teenager, a man she had been forbidden to marry in order to form the union with Bothwell.

My biography *Daughters of the North: Jean Gordon and Mary, Queen of Scots* has just been published in a new softback edition, by Whittles Publishing. On first publication, the book received excellent reviews and was longlisted for the Highland Book Prize. I'm delighted that it has been released in this new format. During recent publicity events for the new edition, listening to the intelligent audience questions, I have been reflecting on what it means to write a historical biography. In particular, I took part in an event with Prof David Worthington, head of the History department at the University of the Highlands and Islands, chaired by S.G. MacLean, author of the bestselling novel *The Bookseller of Inverness*. We explored our shared interest in history, and discussed the different ways we have chosen to present our research: either through academic study and writing, fictionalisation, or popular biography. These approaches to explaining and sharing Scottish culture have interesting similarities and differences.

I had a long-standing interest in history, but also a wider interest in writing and stories, and I found that, for me, history came alive through studying people's lives. After I began to write and publish biographical studies, I became aware of



the academic study of life-writing, and the study of the different approaches that people can take.

My approach is sociological, as opposed to psychological. I am interested in the worlds people live in. Everyone's life is a tension between their free choices, and the options that are available to them. Jean Gordon was a strong, sometimes single-minded woman, but her choices come alive through studying the world that she lived in: what did life look like for women in the 16th century? What was her upbringing like? Was it typical – how did it compare with others? How did Scotland compare with England, or with France, or with Scandinavian countries? What other countries would Scotland have looked to in the 16th century? What was the culture that Jean was exposed to – education, books, plays, art?

In the introduction to my book, I explain that I wanted to know more about my home in the north of Scotland. People ascribe meaning to 'the north'. Images of clans and Jacobites swirl through our popular culture, while, as a playwright, I found that describing a character as 'a Highland woman' tended to lead to the character being played in a particular way – as a meek, quiet, Walter Scott-type female figure, shrouded in a shawl and diffident in her opinions. I wanted to know what life was really like for women in the north of Scotland in the 16th century. Jean's life, from her birth in the north-east to her second marriage in the Far North, covered a geographical area that was very familiar to me, and offered a new, northern perspective on the familiar story of Mary, Queen of Scots.

The romantic story of Mary, Queen of Scots appeals to many people, and I was interested in what is sometimes portrayed as the love triangle between Mary, Bothwell and Jean Gordon. There are many, sometimes wildly different, versions of this relationship in historical and fictional representations of Mary's story, and I wanted to know what the truth was. My attention was caught by a footnote in Antonia Fraser's classic biography of Mary, Queen of Scots: it explained that Jean had not, in fact, wanted to marry Bothwell at all, because she had been in love with someone else, and shared that Jean actually did go on to marry her childhood sweetheart, at the end of a long and full life. Almost everyone at the court of Mary, Queen of Scots met with

disaster – not least Bothwell, who, whatever he did in life, did not deserve his horrible fate in a Scandinavian prison. I was curious to know how Jean had escaped this sad destiny.

I quickly learnt that Jean's life was far more complex than her brief mentions in Mary's story could show. She actually married three times, and through her second marriage became Countess of Sutherland, in charge of a huge swathe of the north of Scotland. 'Countess of Sutherland' is a loaded title in Highland history, that comes with many negative associations, and I wanted to know how this woman – whose life story I was already invested in – fitted in to the history of a family whose later actions in the Highlands Clearances were notorious. I was to learn that Jean essentially shaped what the Sutherlands were to become.

Being a biographer, rather than a historian, brought other advantages. Jean Gordon lived until she was in her 80s, from the reign of Regent Mary of Guise through to the reign of Charles I. The historians who study Mary of Guise are not necessarily the same historians who study Charles I. Likewise, study of the Reformation isn't always linked to study of clan feuds, or emigration to north America – but all these things were encompassed by this one woman's life. By following Jean Gordon, I could see someone's reaction to multiple events, and see how changes in Scottish history were experienced in one lifetime. Studying history through the reigns of kings and queens is a discredited approach, but even studying history through particular civil movements involves chopping things up into arbitrary blocks: people's lives are rarely so neat, and biography can show us how history is lived.

Jean Gordon was not just reacting to events either, but had a lot of power. It was important to me not just to examine secondary sources, but to go back, as much as possible, to original sources. I was able to write a full and rich biography of Jean's life because there survive many different papers of relevance to her life, from financial and administrative documents to a cache of letters written by Jean herself. To find several private letters is fairly unusual for someone from the 16th century, and particularly unusual for a woman from the 16th century. Jean, though, was effectively in charge of the Sutherland estates for three generations: during the lifetime of her husband (sometimes, though possibly unfairly, described as a weak man), again during the minority of her son, and then during the minority of her grandson. Any analysis of the Sutherland estates that ignores her contribution is flawed. On original estate documents, she is the signatory to important decisions, often a lone female name among 'sundry other country gentlemen'. When she died, Jean was buried with the full honours usually reserved for a male earl.

Jean's son Robert Gordon wrote *The Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland* in Jean's lifetime – a document that, for me as a biographer, became not just a history of a family, but a source for a son's descriptions of his mother. We gain from Robert's writing personal details that it would be impossible to find elsewhere: descriptions of how he was sent to a wet-nurse as a child; descriptions of Jean's lost children who died in infancy.

Robert Gordon's *Genealogy* is a fascinating document in many ways, which would repay wider study. I found, when reading about Jean Gordon, that in many cases historians had focused on events and sources from further south in Scotland, around the troubled court of Mary, Queen of Scots. Events at court were dramatic – but there was also plenty going on in the north of Scotland. 'The Helmsdale Poisoning' is an example of the Earls of Caithness and Sutherland reacting to and taking advantage of the chaos around Mary's court to settle personal scores in the north, while the dispensers of justice were too preoccupied to take full reprisals. Historians have continued to be distracted by Mary's court, perhaps overlooking that this, along with subsequent clashes between Caithness and Sutherland, was a key moment in the battle for power in the Far North, linked to the slow decline of the clan system. Much of Jean's time as Countess of Sutherland was taken up by the interplay between Caithness, Sutherland and the Clan Mackay – and it was by no means settled who would emerge victorious. The clan system in Scotland is popularly shown as ending abruptly after Culloden, but by studying Jean's life I saw how it was changing gradually throughout the 16th century, one slow battle and alliance at a time. For Jean, too, this was not a theoretical change, but a personal one: she arranged the marriage of her daughter to the Chief of Mackay, and the clans' loss of power became a personal relationship between Jean and her first grandson, Donald of the Troubles, Chief of Mackay and later leader of the famous Mackay army in the Thirty Years War. I could read about the development of the Mackay clan's status through Jean, Donald and Jean's sons' letters. By focusing on a personal relationship, I could also make a complex situation clear and understandable for the reader.

Jean Gordon lived pre-Clearances, when the population of Scotland was not disproportionately centred around the capital. Later events, rather than an accurate assessment of relative contemporary importance, turned the focus away from the north. Another example of the way that history is framed by contemporary assumptions is the attitude to women. Instead of examining what women were doing, assumptions are made by historians of what women should be doing. A concrete example of this is Jean Gordon's written marriage arrangement with Bothwell.

Jean Gordon and Bothwell's marriage and divorce, so crucial to Mary, Queen of Scots' story, have been widely studied. One point that several historians have noted is the signatures on Jean and Bothwell's marriage agreement: Jean Gordon's mother, Lady Huntly (Elizabeth Keith) signs 'with her hand led on the pen'. This, stated more than one historian, was because she was a woman, and so couldn't write. However, Elizabeth Keith was not only literate, she was an able administrator who had run the family estate while her husband Lord Huntly was imprisoned in England, arranging marriages for her children and writing to the Regent Mary of Guise. Copies of holograph letters, written in Elizabeth Keith's own hand, have been transcribed many years ago and are easily available in the printed correspondence of Mary of Guise.

So why was Elizabeth Keith's hand 'led on the

pen'? She wasn't infirm, as she continued to be a force both within the Huntly family and in the wider arena of the Scottish court for many years – going on to play a prominent role, for example, in Mary's escape after the Rizzio murder, and advising the new Earl of Huntly, her son George, right up until Carberry Hill. I believe it was a statement of her objection to the marriage of Jean and Bothwell. A plausible reason for this is that Elizabeth Keith was a staunch Catholic, and Bothwell was a committed Protestant. There may also have been personal objections to Bothwell, or the knowledge of Jean's prior commitment to another man.

Even more interestingly, for a biographer, below Elizabeth Keith's signature is Jean Gordon's, and she signs 'with my own hand'. If historians drew attention to this it was to say that it showed that Jean was literate, while her mother was not. But in the new context – that they were both literate – it shows a moment of tension at the wedding: Jean's mother was opposed to the match, but Jean is clearly stating that she makes her own choice. In a novel, this could be a dramatic scene. In my biography, I wanted introduce the idea of speculation over motive, and question and show how the signatures had been ignored and misinterpreted, but my aim in this book was to look for the truth and increase understanding, not introduce fiction.

As a writer, I also widened my search for information, looking not only at documents, but also at more non-traditional sources, such as art, music and literature, to help me understand my subject. There are two portraits of Jean: one made at the time of her marriage to Bothwell, and one of her as an old woman. This is an incredible resource for a biographer of a 16th century figure – so many people within my narrative had no portrait made of them, so I could only imagine what they looked like, and even very important figures only had one portrait. What people look like matters: later in her life, Jean Gordon had a fraught relationship with her neighbour, the Earl of Caithness – who was, in fact, Bothwell's nephew. With no portrait of him, it is impossible to say whether or not the nephew resembled Bothwell – but, surely, for Jean, it would have affected her personal interaction with the Earl in some way if he looked very similar to her ex-husband. For Jean, though, I had two portraits, which I could compare and see the passing of time, and imagine how Jean had reacted to the incredible events of her life. Because Jean was a wealthy woman, these are very high-quality portraits, by the best painters of the day, at a time when portraiture was what British art was renowned for. These paintings helped to bring her alive.

Songs, too, were a way to understand Jean Gordon's life. The ballad tradition of the north-east has preserved many songs that have their roots in the time of Jean's life. Her family were prominent, important people, whose choices affected the lives of people around them, and their exploits were not forgotten. Songs have to be used carefully as evidence – Jean's life did not play out exactly as it's told in the song about her early love, Alex Ogilvie, "The Duke o' Gordon's Daughters" – but the song itself is evidence of how much her life was gossiped over, and how important

her marriage choices would be to the wider community. Jean's sister Margaret's marriage to the Master of Forbes should have brought a feud to an end – it didn't, and the wider community was very aware of the consequences of that. Jean's marriages had an impact on people around her and the songs reflect that. Meanwhile, the antics of Jean's brother Adam, the 'Herod of the North', are remembered in some much darker songs of feuding, and show how her family's reputation was viewed in different sections of society.

Literature, too, was a way into understanding Jean's thought process: her first two marriages were organised, dynastic unions. The story of her lost love, Alex Ogilvie, was romantic – but how would Jean have seen it herself? The legal wording of their marriage agreement is dry, but suggests their union is not one of necessity. Jean's son Robert talked about how Jean married 'for the sake of her family', but there did not seem to be any benefit to anyone other than the couple themselves. The gossip reported at Mary, Queen of Scots' court, and the songs of the north-east, supported the idea that Jean's third marriage was a genuine love story. Organising my timeline of events, I realised that Jean's son Robert had attended court at the time of the premiere of several Shakespeare plays. "Romeo and Juliet" was a contemporary play for Jean Gordon: the 16th century idea of love was not that different to our own.

After I wrote my first biography, the life of the Golden Age crime writer Josephine Tey, I realised that many people did not quite know how biography worked. There sometimes seemed to be an assumption that a biographer had all the facts and just needed to lay them out. There was no full understanding of how the facts had to be discovered, usually in a random order, and then tested. In order to make a readable, accessible biography, the facts also have to be written in an engaging way – and the reader needs to clearly understand why they are important to both the protagonist, and to the later reader. This is not necessarily the same job that a historian is doing.

As a writer, I focus on the telling of the story: in this book, for Jean Gordon, that meant the presentation of the facts. I want to know the facts of what happened, but the writing matters – I don't want to have read something that is painfully dry. However, although I am not a historian, I was not writing a novel and making things up either: every piece of information in my book was as rigorously checked as I could manage, and the book is fully referenced so that readers can check for themselves – as I enjoy doing when I read history.

I believe our history is important: the story of Jean Gordon's life tells me so much about the past in the north of Scotland, and about women's lives; how things have developed and changed until they have reached our current day. I also believe biography is important: learning about Jean Gordon helped me to put the bigger story of Mary, Queen of Scots into context; it showed me how historians had made choices about what to emphasise; and it gave me an insight into how one person had lived through many different eras, and what bigger changes meant for the actions of individuals. This sort of understanding gives empathy, which we can apply to our lives

now. And finally, I love writing and stories: Jean Gordon's life fascinates me because the stories and characters are so compelling. From the trial of her father's corpse in front of the Scottish Parliament, to her disastrous honeymoon with Bothwell where she wore mourning for her lost love, to her later contented relationship with Alexander, or her worries for her grandson Donald of the Troubles – this story of one woman brings history to life.

Note: *Daughters of the North: Jean Gordon and Mary, Queen of Scots* is published by Whittles Publishing. Softback details: ISBN 9781849956017, £16.99. Also available as an e-book and audiobook.

Stirling 900: Reviving Walking the Marches: The Captain's Story

Andrew McEwan: with video introduction and coda by Murray Cook

(to play the video above, download the article PDF and open it with a desktop PDF viewer that supports media playback)

Fig 1: Captain Andy McEwan and Councilor Alasdair Tollemache (carrying the Maces) leading the 2024 March

2024 was a very special year for Stirling as celebrations took place to mark 900 years as a Royal Burgh. Central to those celebrations and the principal civic event was the Walking of the Marches. The atmosphere in the city centre on the morning of Saturday 25th of May was electric, estimates put the attendance of participants and spectators at up to 2,000.

The eight Birlawmen[1] in four groups were piped to the city centre, reports that the Marches[2] had been checked and were intact were received by the Captain of the Birlawmen who in turn reported this to the now Lord Provost of

1 burgh official who determined disputes in their particular neighbourhood

2 city boundaries

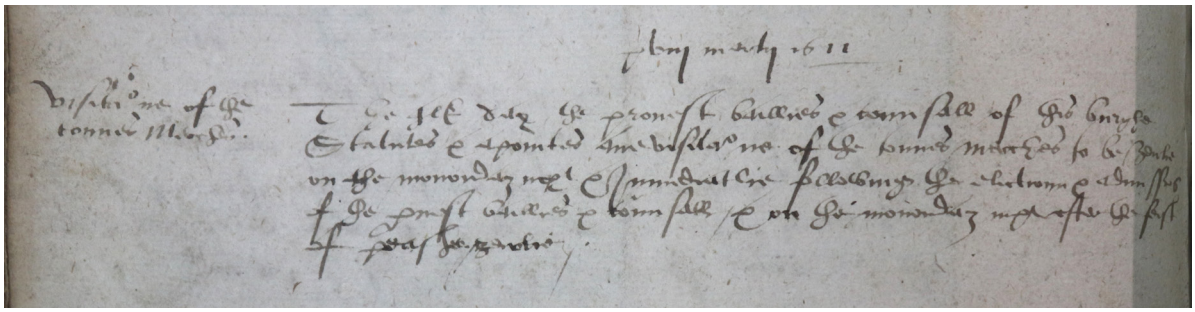


Fig 2: copy of records and transcription.

Stirling[3], the Dean of Guild[4] and the Deacon Convenor of the Seven Incorporated Trades[5] and an invitation issued for them to join the Birlawmen in a perambulation of some of the most ancient Marches of Stirling in celebration of this. Thereafter, accompanied by three pipe bands, hundreds of participants set off through the city in celebration of part of the history and heritage of Stirling. It's not a long walk but it marked the end of this part of the Walking of the Marches journey:

https://youtu.be/mq6E9tunOgM

Stirling 900 Walking of the Marches

It's fair to say that the ancient tradition of the Walking of the Marches in Stirling had pretty well been forgotten about, well not quite. One man started to look into it. With friends, an annual boundary walk started. Nothing official just friends sharing an interest, and the odd beer!

By tradition the Walking of the Marches was organised by the Guildry of Stirling, the Seven Incorporated Trades and the town council. It just happens that among those participating in the boundary walk were members of the Incorporation of Hammermen[6], one of the Seven Incorporated Trades. From this the idea of officially restarting the Walking of the Marches emerged.

It certainly is an ancient tradition. Research to date shows that the oldest reference to the Walking of the Marches in a surviving council minute dates back to 1611 (*SCA reference SBC/11/1 Stirling Royal Burgh minutes 1597 – 1619 minute of 23rd March 1611*).

The tradition of The Walking of the Marches, or the inspection of the boundaries, goes back to the days before accurate maps when the boundaries were recorded in writing and the only way to ensure that there was no encroachment was to inspect them to ensure that no one had nicked a bit of the burgh. In Stirling this was carried out by the Birlawmen. At one time the boundaries were marked March stones but these have all disappeared over time, no doubt there will be a sill or lintel somewhere that was once a March stone. The tradition became that the Birlawmen inspected the Marches and marked them by the turning of turfs.

The Scots dialect dictionary shows that the

3 the Lord Provost is a civic official, head and chariman of the burgh council https://www.stirling.gov.uk/council-and-committees/about-the-council/stirling-council-lord-provost/stirling-council-lord-provost/

4 https://guildryofstirling.co.uk/

5 https://stirlingtrades.wordpress.com/

6 https://stirlingincorporatedtrades.org/incorporation-of-hammermen/

name birlawman comes from birlie or Birlaw-court, a court of country neighbours to settle local concerns. A birlie (birlaw) man was a member of the Court of Permabultion.

The Birlawmen were officials of the Burgh Court, and the Perambulation Registers, recording the details of the walking of the Marches, were records of the Burgh Court. Those who had encroached upon the Burgh boundaries would be prosecuted by the Burgh Court if they refused to comply with orders or to repair fences, roads, walls etc as ordered to after the Walking had taken place.

By 2014 the idea of properly reviving the Walking of the Marches had firmly taken root and members of the Incorporation of Hammermen approached the then provost of Stirling Mike Robbins. In effect this was the make or break moment and we were delighted by the enthusiastic reception to the idea. The Marches were on! In September of that year, for the first time since 1978, the Walking of the Marches in Stirling would take place.

The support of the provost was critical and we are delighted to say that not only did Mike Robbins support us but we have enjoyed the support of his successors Christine Simpson, Douglas Dodds and the present incumbent Elaine Watterson. Incidentally, Mike Robbins is no longer a councillor but he is a member of the Marches court and is vice-captain of the Birlawmen. The Walking of the Marches can be catching!

So why did it die out? Firstly it is fair to say that it was never a big event in Stirling, we look on with envy at other communities where the walking or in many cases riding of the Marches is a huge community event and a real highlight of the year. Looking at later references, while the Walking of the Marches in Stirling was still taking place it feels like it was more of a chore than a celebration. What had at one time been an annual event had drifted to being something done every seven years. It is also likely that local government reorganisation in the 1970's had an effect, Stirling no longer had a town council instead there was Stirling District Council covering a larger area and the even larger Central Regional Council. The Walking of the Marches was forgotten about.

The 1970 Walking of the Marches, yes I know it was eight years until the next one but it's a fact, put a new twist on the tradition, the participants went by bus! Well it was raining. Nonetheless the reports of the event show that the traditions (other than walking) were observed, there were Birlawmen carrying picks and shovels, when they got off the bus the procession was led by pipers. The then provost Dr Robert McIntyre was prominent as were the members of the Guildry and the Seven Incorporated Trades. Anyway Stirling is a big place so a bus made it easier to get around. All was followed by a dinner in the evening.

Records of various historic Walking of the Marches are looked after by the Stirling Council archives and they provide a great insight into what our predecessors did. The records stretch back to 1695 (*SBC/27/1 1695 – 1708*). From my point of view the record of the 1820 perambulation is fascinating and also pretty legible (*SBC/27/4 1820 – 1822*)! That was a turbulent year with the

1820 insurrection and the subsequent executions of Baird and Hardie in Stirling. With the Walking of the Marches taking place in July that year it was between the insurrection and the executions. It's all still there, the perambulation, the Birlawmen, but it was a different time and the Walking of the Marches was a serious business. In those days the Birlawmen were paid by the master of Cowane's Hospital.

The payments are given in the Cowane's Hospital Trust account book for 1803 – 1825 at the Council Archives. The payments for the Walking of the Marches held in the 1690s are given in the Burgh Treasurer's account books, however. We don't know why Cowane's was paying the fees in 1820, but the Cowane's Hospital Trust was very closely linked to the Burgh at this time, with the Provost and Councillors sitting as Trustees.

The perambulants inspected, among other things, mill lades and among other problems identified that mill dam of the burgh mill was in a very insecure state with part of the bank at the sluice having given way. Repair was required.

But that was then and times have changed, we don't even have burgh mill any more. What we had to try and do was to preserve the traditions of the Walking of the Marches while trying to make it relevant to today. As they discovered in 1970 Stirling is a big place and a perambulation of the boundaries is a very long way, we needed to create something new while respecting our past. The first decision was a fairly easy one, the Walking of the Marches would be a celebration of Stirling. After all our history is all around us in Stirling. It would focus on a procession through the city centre.

We decided that the perambulation would be completed the Saturday before the Walking of the Marches. Today we still do this, it allows the Captain of the Birlawmen to report at the start of the ceremonial event that the Marches have been inspected, that they are intact and have been marked by the Birlawmen by the turning of turfs. Of course this report is made to the Provost, Dean of Guild and the Deacon Convenor of the Seven Incorporated Trades as it always has been.

So the traditions are maintained, traditional terms are used. Birlawmen, that is what they were always called so we maintain that term. But there is one important change, the name is no longer gender specific and we now have lady Birlawmen. The Birlawmen with their picks and shovels are almost a symbol of the Stirling Walking of the Marches. We have developed badges and medals for the Walking of the Marches and have adopted the crossed pick and shovel as our emblem. In 2014 the Birlawmen carried real picks and shovels but they complained that they were too heavy – and they couldn't pop them in the back of the bus anymore! Today the Birlawmen carry wooden replicas that are much lighter. The Birlawmen are now also distinguished by the wearing of blue bonnets.

A central character in the Stirling Walking of the Marches is the captain of the Birlawmen. The captain is responsible for swearing in the Birlawmen, for reporting that the Marches have been inspected and are complete. The captain also leads the procession as it wynds through the city centre. Since 2014 this role has been taken by Andy McEwan who did it for the final time in

Fig 3: Valentina Bold and Janie Meikle Bland, the first ever female Birlawmen

2024. Even in the time that has elapsed since 2014 the organisation of the Walking of the Marches has evolved. The committee, the Marches Court, is made up of volunteers but central to that are the Birlawmen. Being a birlawman is now a journey and one that will end with the participant serving for one year as the captain of the Birlawmen, there will be no repeat of one person doing it for years.

In 2014 we were led by a piper, today we have pipe bands. So the revived Walking of the Marches has come a long way, it's been quite a journey but in 2024 year we took another big step. In 2024 Stirling celebrated 900 years as a royal burgh and the Walking of the Marches was a principal part of the celebrations. On Saturday 25th of May starting at 10.45 at the bottom of King Street, in the very heart of the city centre, the Walking of the Marches commenced.

The scene was set by the bellman, the provost welcomed all to the Walking of the Marches. The captain addressed the Birlawmen asking them to confirm that a perambulation had been completed, that the Marches were intact and they have marked them by the turning of turfs. That being the case the captain reported to the provost, Dean of Guild and the Deacon Convenor of the Seven Incorporated Trades and invited them to join with the Birlawmen and accompany them on a perambulation of some of the most ancient Marches of Stirling.

After all at one time the Marches would have been around the castle rock. With that the procession set off around the city centre before visiting the Smith art gallery and museum where a toast to the Marches takes place. Then it is off up the hill to Scotland's oldest bowling green at Cowane's Hospital, in the shadow of the historic church of the Holy Rude where James VI was crowned. It is a wonderful historic setting and here the procession finished and entertainment was provided. Part of the entertainment is provided by reenactors who bring history to life, they are also part of the procession.

Prominent in the procession is the blue blanket of the seven incorporated trades, the original is in the Stirling Smith Museum, it is now a fragile relic that dates back to the time of Mary Queen of Scots and said to have been sewn by the Queen and her ladies in Stirling Castle. The blue blanket carried today is an exact replica of the original and was produced for the trades by the Stirling embroiderers guild.

To make a report that the Marches are complete the perambulation has to be completed. That was done as always the week before and as

Fig 4: Stuart Campbell, The Deacon Convenor of the 7 Incorporated Trades; Alan Simpson Lord Lieutenant; Elaine Waterston Lord Provost and Elizabeth Road, Lord Dean of the Merchant Guild of Stirling

Fig 5: The Blue Blanket Carried by Stirling's Hammerman

part of the Stirling 900 celebrations it started in the castle. The party was piped into the chapel royal where the captain of the Birlawmen, him again, took charge but only after an introduction from the bellman and a welcome from the provost. A ceremony took place to swear in the Birlawmen, the party were then piped out the castle and set off around the city. All of this was thoroughly enjoyed by hundreds of visitors to the castle on a glorious summers day.

The Walking of the Marches is part of the history of Stirling, thanks to the hard work of the Marches court it is also part of the future. There are ambitious plans to grow the event further in future. We are delighted to partner with others who share our vision, we work with the wonderful Stirling Smith[7] – home among other things to the world's oldest football, the executioner's axe last used at the 1820 execution of Baird and Hardie[8] (who were hanged first) plus an array of items related to the Guildry and Seven Incorporated Trades. We have enjoyed the support of Cowane's hospital, no visit to Stirling should be complete without a visit to the beautifully restored seventeenth century building that is the finest surviving example of its type in Scotland and today serves as the Guildhall. John Cowane was Dean of Guild and is Stirling's greatest benefactor, he died in 1633 but his legacy still benefits Stirling today.

Cowane's Hospital[9] and the Church of the Holy Rude[10] are at the historic heart of Stirling and sit close to the castle, no article on Stirling is complete without reference to Scotland's finest castle. We worked closely with the castle in planning the 2024 event and are so grateful for their support and also the support from the superb Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders museum that sits at the highest part of the castle rock.

The 2025 Walking of the Marches built on the legacy of the 2024 event with Robin Mair as Captain of the Birlawmen. Planning is now well underway for the 2026 event that takes place on 30th May starting at the foot of King Street at 11am with past provost Mike Robbins as Captian of the Birlawmen. Come and join us if you can, the date will now always be the final Saturday of May.

CODA: THE FINALE...29TH MARCH 2025 DR MURRAY COOK, STIRLING COUNCIL ARCHAEOLOGIST AND BIRLAWMAN

The final event of Stirling 900 was a march of 17 pipe bands and various local voluntary groups from Stirling Castle Esplanade, through the city, across old Stirling Bridge to Stirling County Rugby Club's ground and the core of the Stirling Bridge Battlefield. The procession featured the great and good of Stirling from the Lord Provost and Lord Lieutenant to Cruachan, a Shetland pony and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders mascot. The march was launched by the Marches Captain, Andy in his final official act. The Birlawmen and women are back where they belong at the heart of Stirling a fitting tribute to Captain Andy McEwan.

7 https://www.smithartgalleryandmuseum.co.uk/

8 http://www.stirlingarchives.scot/2020/09/08/execution-john-baird-andrew-hardie-8th-september-1820/

9 https://cowanes.org.uk/

10 https://www.churchoftheholyrude.co.uk/

Fig 6: aerial shot at rugby

FURTHER READING

Stirling 900-Walking The Marches-The Register of the Court of Perambulation
http://www.stirlingarchives.scot/2024/05/01/stirling-900-walking-the-marches-the-registers-of-the-perambulation-court/

More Than a Game: Seasonal Handball in Scotland

Neill Martin

The intention here is to explore aspects of traditional handball in Scotland, with particular reference to the role violence and perceived violence play in the game's practice and reception. Attention will also be focussed on the performative dimensions of the game. The article concludes with reflections on the connection between the game's intense physicality and attendant risks to its continuance. Our concentration will be on two of the most well developed games, those of Kirkwall and Jedburgh. We will also make reference to the games at Atherstone and Ashbourne in England, in order to compare approaches to managing the degree of violence inherent in the game and the threat this poses to the tradition.

From the historical record we know that football was a popular mass sport, joining other traditional games as well-established elements in the lives of ordinary people across England and Scotland. As early as 1314 King Edward II issued a proclamation banning the game and in Scotland, no less than four consecutive Scottish kings passed acts of parliament in 1424, 1458, 1471, and 1491, banning the 'unprofitable' games of football and golf, instead promoting archery in an attempt to maintain a war-ready male population (Cormack 2016: 310). In this endeavour the state had only mixed success and football and other traditional games continued, being especially popular on key dates in the calendar such as Shrove Tuesday (in Scots, *Fastern's E'en*). The favoured locations were the churchyard and the street, the former seen as both a secular and a sacred space. There was special concern over football, citing damage to church property (especially windows), the disruption to commerce, the number of serious injuries sustained and the ease with which the game could turn riotous (Cormack 2016: 315). As John Burnett puts it, "the violent nature of the game is clear; indeed, it was central to the play" (Burnett 2000: 89). There was considerable and prolonged resistance to these restrictions as shown by the multiple examples of church discipline meted out to those playing football over the course of the succeeding centuries. During the 19th century these restrictions resulted in traditional football transformed into handball in some locations, this perceived as less likely to cause damage to property, life and limb.

A painting by Alexander Carse nicely illustrates the very physical and rather wild confusion of a traditional football game. It dates to 1818 and the location is tentatively identified as Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders, the site of the most well-known

of locations for handball in mainland Scotland. It is thought to be the earliest depiction of the game of football. In the painting we can see pushing, shoving, players on the ground, at least one injury, a father taking his boy to safety. Also of note is the proximity of non-players of all ages, including children.

Although once widespread, traditional handball games in Scotland are now found only in Orkney and the Scottish Borders. In Orkney, contests take place in the main town of Kirkwall on Christmas Day and New Year's Day (although not if these fall on a Sunday). The two teams are the Uppies and the Doonies. The Uppies hail (goal) is in the town, while the Doonies hail the ball at the harbour, often in the sea itself. The Uppies may be said to represent the land, agriculture and the season of summer, and the Doonies fishing and the season of winter. There may also be a dry/wet opposition implied. The outcome of the match was held to indicate whether the year ahead would be a good one for the fruits of the land or of the sea (Robertson 2005: 222). Four traditional games survive in the Borders, at Ancrum, Denholm, Hobkirk and Jedburgh, each taking place in the period around Fastern's E'en, the Tuesday before Lent. Players compete in each other's games and this forms an eight-day season of play. A fifth, revived, game at Duns now takes place in July. Most teams in the Borders are Uppies versus Doonies. The timing of the Borders games is at the transition between the period before Lent and Lent itself, and it is tempting to see the games as an expression of this aspect of the calendar. The painting by Brueghel the Elder 'The Battle between Carnival and Lent' (1559) is the best-known visual depiction of this transition conceptualised as a contest. As at Orkney, Borders games often follow the pattern of one goal being identified with water and the other land.

I mention these features because the extraordinary tenacity with which communities have long held on to this tradition in post-Reformation Scotland is not just a reflection of generalised antipathy to their being told not to play, but because these dates – Christmas, New Year and Shrove Tuesday – are deeply embedded in the seasonal calendar. As such we can discern a degree of compulsion among those who practise these traditions; the feeling that these games *must* be played at these points in the year, being seen as natural as the movement of the seasons themselves. The Reformed church swept away the old religious calendar as well as popular festive days; those players of football being hauled up to answer for their disobedience over the centuries are not merely anti-establishment; the removal of these key dates and their associated traditions caused a rupture in the way people experienced the passing of time itself, given that much of the population probably measured time by where they were in the sequence of fairs and festivals. That this tenacity to maintain the tradition exists today is not in doubt, although it is driven more by an attachment to place and the expression of local and regional identity. An extraordinary example of this determination is from the village of Ancrum where in 1974 and after 150 years of play, the game was at risk of dying out. A local

player, in order to ensure the game's continuance, carried a ball, often alone, on each match day from the Mercat (Market) Cross to each hail. He did this for 22 years until, by changing the date to a Saturday, he was able to secure two viable teams and the game restarted (Hornby 2008: 120).

As to the game itself it is worth setting out its general features. Play begins from a central point, a neutral, communal space, often the Mercat Cross of the town or where it once stood. Each ba' has a certain amount of money attached to it, having been sponsored by people or businesses. It is thrown up and the two teams compete to take it back to their own territory and score or 'hail' it at a designated place. The individual who hails the ba' (not the team) claims the money. This is the first of several differences with modern competitive sport. There is no visual distinction between the players, any number can play on each side, there are few if any rules, no referee (except Duns, see below) and no boundaries showing the limits of the play-space. In Jedburgh and Kirkwall the hails are relatively close, the action taking place within the towns themselves. In other locations in the Borders, however, the hails may be further apart; at Hobkirk the goals at one point were spread over an area of 23 square kilometres (Hornby 2008: 106). Being sponsored and supplied by individuals, several balls may be played one after the other and thus play may last for many hours, continuing for as long as it takes for all the balls to be hailed, even after dark. Smuggling the ball in one's pocket or hiding it for collection later are acceptable. We can therefore say that in this play-world, the notion of cheating is absent.

In Kirkwall and Jedburgh, where one lives or was born within the towns determines whether one is Uppie or Doonie. For the purposes of the game, visitors are included in the topographical schema; in Jedburgh, Doonies are both those from the lower section of the town and also 'outsiders'. In Kirkwall, visitors are Doonies if they arrive by ferry and disembark at the pier and Uppies if they arrive by air (Robertson 2005: 6). The overarching logic of the tradition thus presents as a total system, designating a role to and incorporating all those present, even unwitting observers.

The near-complete lack of regulation and control of play means that both players and onlookers are at risk of potentially serious injury. This is particularly the case in Kirkwall where around three hundred individuals play in a relatively compact space watched by around 1000 spectators. Border ba' games attract smaller numbers so injuries are less frequent.

Wooden barricades in Jedburgh protect the windows of shops (but crucially not the onlookers). This said, while minor injuries are common every year, more serious incidents are rare. In Kirkwall the most significant in recent years were as a result of a collapsed scrum in 1988 where three players lost consciousness, two requiring resuscitation – there were five hospitalisations.

ON PHYSICALITY AND THREAT

In thinking about the question of violence in this tradition, it is worth making some general observations. As a concept, it is obviously highly subjective. Whether the way the game is played can be considered violent is a matter of

perception. If approached from the perspective of law and order then the game is clearly a challenge to the norms of civic life and reckless in its apparently casual approach as regards the risk to life and property. This, however, reflects an 'alien eye' which ignores context or at least assigns little importance to it. From the standpoint of the players, their behaviour, even if a punch or two is thrown occasionally in the heat of the moment, is not inappropriate in the context of a game which is by nature rough and ready, highly physical and carries risks. A degree of violent behaviour is justified as an integral component of the tradition. What exactly is violence in this context? The contorted faces and desperate struggling are startling, even upsetting to the outsider, but to both players and those who support the game this intense physicality is legitimate, justifiable and expected. More than this, it is rational; pushing, shoving, elbowing, disregard for the proximity of others, targeted aggression; this it is how one gets to the ball; this is how the game is played. There is, then, a tactical reason for this behaviour; it is not irrational, or 'out of control' or likely to lead to an escalation of violence.

Just as in centuries past, the game takes place in the street, not in a clearly delineated play-space. Onlookers share this space and are not kept safe by the usual barriers, buffer zones and marshalling they have come to expect at public events. However much the players and unofficial, hovering overseers try, the potential is there for bystanders to be injured. It is the nature of the game; the players are uncontained, free; they may go where they wish, pressing into shop doorways or spilling into the shop itself. This disregard not just for the proximity of non-players but even their shops and homes makes it difficult for non-locals to compare it to anything else but the kind of riotous, reckless vandalism that they may have seen on TV. This idea that the players may go where they like to retrieve the ba' – into private property if necessary – is accepted by locals but hard to fathom for the outsider. However, this privilege of unimpeded access to homes was also a feature of seasonal guising or mumming, where entry to the interior space was an expected and usually welcome experience, if a potentially unsettling one. Again we see a collision of points of view and a problem of perception.

As we have noted, the game involves trying to score what would be in conventional sport an 'own goal'. The struggle and fitful progress looks familiar and it could be argued that this reversal in the expected direction of play makes little difference to the essential nature of it. However, this format removes what is surely a core aspect of competitive sport; the encroachment, through skill and superior strength and stamina, into the opponents' 'half' through overwhelming their defences, placing them in an inferior position. The format thus also removes much of the defensive aspect and with it the sense of being diminished or humiliated. This in itself mitigates against lasting ill-feeling and the kind of frustration which leads to physical aggression and real violence. As we have noted, in a game where the ball can be secreted in pockets or even, I have been told, taken away in a child's buggy to be 'hailed' at leisure, the concept of 'unfairness' is absent.

This in turn means that inter-player tension is relatively muted, especially at smaller games. Indeed, participants generally cooperate to keep the game going. The monetary value on each ba' is modest and hardly worth behaving in such a way as to fracture a relationship or cause a deliberate 'foul' or injury. This is the nature of the intimate communication that binds all the players together. The game is fleeting, ephemeral. The divisions up/down are only strongly invoked for a day, an annual deconstruction and reassembly of a coherent fellowship of players and their community or communities. The game looks like something to do with conflict, but it is far more a cooperative activity which relates to the expression of local and regional cultural distinctiveness.

Even in the medieval period, such games had a 'double faced' aspect:

> They allowed for the expression of intimate unity and solidarity and for the expression of equally intimate and intense hostility, without giving the slightest impression that the participants themselves saw anything contradictory or incompatible in these fluctuations. Shrove Tuesday football, a ritualized and, according to our notions, fairly savage brawl between neighbouring groups, is a striking example of this compatibility between emotionally charged activities which seem to be incompatible according to present standards. (Elias & Dunning 1986: 180)

Media coverage of traditional hand ba' in Scotland focusses on its rough, highly physical character and the occasional low-level violence, pointing to a perspective which aside from marvelling that the game exists at all sees such encounters as thrilling in way quite distinct from more contemporary sport. For some of the tourists attending the game at Kirkwall, their interest and participation reflect a search for not just an exciting experience, but also perhaps reflect contemporary taste for less regulated, more extreme, raw and violent sports such as mixed martial arts or bare-knuckle boxing. The bull-run at Pamplona would be a good parallel with the Kirkwall ba' game, attracting thrill-seekers from round the world, most of whom achieve 'bragging rights' and live to tell the tale. Getting the balance between tension, excitement and safety is important for a successful event:

> A game of football constitutes a form of group dynamics with a built-in tension. If this tension […] becomes too low, its value as a leisure event declines. The game will be dull and boring. If the tension becomes too great, it can provide a lot of excitement for the spectators but it will also entail great dangers for players and spectators alike. It passes from the mimetic to the non-mimetic sphere of crisis. (Elias & Dunning 1986: 89)

The suggestion that contemporary sport is too tame for some is explored by a study of the rising popularity of bare-knuckle boxing. Outlining what he terms the trend for 'de-sportization', Raúl Sánchez-García argues that the format of US bare-knuckle fighting increases the *perceived* danger of the practice although it does not increase real harm, such as in the number of concussions. (Sánchez-García 2020: 1645–1646). His argument is that for all the primitive, shocking appearance of bare-knuckle boxing, it is not inherently more dangerous. We might

say it is becoming popular because of a change in taste and a pivoting away from mainstream boxing which is not raw or thrilling enough in a world where, certainly in my country, children are being taught mixed martial arts and kick boxing. Perhaps this helps us understand the hand ba' and its relationship to violence. It is a raw, tough, rough event which has the *appearance* of real violence, but is not in and of itself *inherently* violent and compares easily to mainstream rugby in terms of injuries. That it is *superficially* violent is not being disputed here, but we know that unlike in previous centuries serious injuries to players in modern times are rare. The real risk attached to the game comes from falling and being crushed. This has been addressed through the convention of stopping play until the fallen player has got himself up. The potential injury to unwary onlookers is a constant, but we cannot say this is connected to the game itself.

We can illustrate the connection between risk, perceived violence and actual violence through a discussion of a selection of video material.

In the documentary-style video from Kirkwall in 2007, that the ba' is a game characterised by friendly rivalry is made very plain from the outset (Doonielads 2007). However, the arrival of one of the teams is presented in the spirit of a war movie, with ominous, cinematic music accompanying the "battalion" of stony-faced players as they approach their rivals. The ba' is then thrown up and "battle" begins, now to a raucous, guitar-heavy soundtrack into which has been mixed the noise of the game and shouting from the players. One punch and one other momentary example of ill-feeling have been selected to be included in the edit. We can note the film was uploaded by 'Doonielads', clearly players from that side of the town. The mixed message is plain to see; the tradition is one of friendly rivalry and co-operation, but the temptation to highlight the disorder, incipient threat of injury and potential for violence is clearly irresistible; indeed one gets the impression that pride in the tradition is linked to these features. Understandably, there are comments from viewers from outside. One German contributor asks why they are fighting each other. Another, also German, suggests he could travel to the game and looks for other volunteers. One comment asks if there is a connection between the game and street violence. In the comments, however, there is also a stern warning to outsiders:

> The Ba is a local tradition, it is not an attraction for adventure tourists to come and try. Passions and loyalties go back generations. If you are not raised around it then you will neither understand it nor have any knowledge that will make you any use to the team you decide to play for. The game doesn't need any more players. (Chinalurch 2010)

The trouble is, having portrayed it in the way the locals have, it does have the character of a challenge, a representation of extreme machismo which invites a response from those eager to test their mettle. Visually we can suggest that connections would easily be made with the violent disorder associated with bitter rivals in mainstream football, further suggesting that those who engage in hooliganism elsewhere would find in the Ba' an opportunity for this behaviour,

licenced by tradition.

In the next video from 2018 in Kirkwall (Sinclair 2018), anxiety about the future of the game has become an obvious concern. We hear an organiser presenting the game as a family tradition, imploring the players to have fun, be safe and for there to be "no punching". He makes reference to an earlier violent incident which he doesn't want to see repeated. The implication that any serious disorder will likely bring about the end of the tradition is made explicit: "I don't want to be the last man who throws up the Kirkwall ba – look after yourselves […] believe in it", a direct and impassioned appeal to the next generation of players. This video, however, also frames the encounter in the spirit of a battle, this time using the theme music from a spaghetti western. The real risk here comes from a non-local player who may not understand or heed the warning given by the organiser.

A similar point is made by an official at the game in Ashbourne, England, in a video entitled "We entered the world's most dangerous football game" filmed by outsiders who visit to play (Alsop 2020). As at April 2023 it had been viewed 3.4 million times. Curating content to maximise visits to a YouTube channel is an obvious driver for the creation of sensationalised material. The video appears on the site via a still image of the creator's bloodied nose:

> Listen to the marshalls. The protection of property and the continuation of the game is their priorities [sic]. You play the game at your own risk […] If you are not a local person, then this is a game for local people who understand the rules. Please, please look after it, listen to what those people are telling you at all times. (Alsop 2020)

It may be for local people, but it is a game now very widely known. In 2006 a film company from Los Angeles attended, which produced a full-length production "Wild in the Streets", narrated by prominent actor Sean Bean and screened at film festivals in the USA.

In Atherstone in England play closely resembles that of the Scottish games, the big difference being that as in Ashbourne we find the very close involvement of numerous marshalls. When someone falls to the ground, a voice says 'keep on your feet' or 'stand him up', clearly recognising trampling as the main risk (Urban Pictures UK 2020). Two policemen are shown nonchalantly walking in a quiet street, looking backwards – the message to the viewer presumably being that they have no involvement in the proceedings. Despite the unexceptional levels of physicality and the smiling faces seen here and there, the title is "Brutal Atherstone Ball Game 2020 takes place in the UK". Specifying the country strongly suggests that this video is intended to be outward-facing.

However, all is not always well at Atherstone. The numbers can be enormous with many, many hundreds either playing or spectating. The video "Violent mass brawl erupts at UKs notorious Atherstone Ball Game: Extended" is an over-18s account of the game from 2019, deliberately packaged to emphasise violent content (Urban Pictures UK 2019). Although the film has been edited to show the worst of the behaviour, it is hard not to see this is an example of a game which

has the potential to get out of hand, where the robust performance of a traditional sport can spill over into thuggery. Cynical, sensationalist editing shows the police doing nothing and the mayor apparently looking down approvingly on the mayhem. There is a lot of fighting and the crowd cheer as property is damaged. We also glimpse a frightened child and some blood. In contrast with the previous video from Ashbourne – by the same makers the following year – the marshalls are shown to be ineffective.

How representative are these videos of the game at Atherstone? The first clip, showing nothing very controversial, was from 2020 and the second, apparently violent one from 2019. Was there really a 'violent mass brawl' on the latter day, or just the usual, very rough sport underway? According to Wikipedia, this second, heavily edited video was viewed 3.4 million times on Facebook (Atherstone Ball Game). There is a huge gulf between the Scottish games and this last example, but such violent images are lapped up by the media and have a profound impact on local councils as they look for an excuse to regulate or even stop them. For local organisers, videos like this illustrate the challenge they face in managing and controlling their own games; each incident of this kind makes the future of all traditional handball games more fragile. Following the 2019 game the local paper asked an organiser for his reaction to the violent images which were being widely shared:

> Mr Bernard, who has been involved with the Ball Game all his adult life, acknowledged the scenes being shared on social media do threaten the future of the event, but are "nothing new" in the centuries-old tradition […] "We discussed it as a committee that night and it's not on, it's hard to say what we can do about it, though. In the past, when things have got out of hand, we've put it out there that the future of the Ball Game is under threat and it calms down a bit the following year."
>
> "I know some of the lads who were involved and I've spoken to them, they threaten the future of the Ball Game. But then it comes back again. It is the nature of it. It's nothing new, if you look on Pathé News to the 1950s and 60s, you will see what they were getting up to back then, it's always been there. But what we've got now is everyone has phones, everything is crystal clear and they can chop together all the worst bits and that's all people see." (Bridge 2020)

The same journalist asked a policeman for comment – his reply is also revealing:

> Sergeant Neil Pearsall, who has been involved with the policing of Atherstone Ball Games for nearly two decades, stressed there was an acceptance a 'level of violence' is involved.
>
> He said: "I can confirm that no arrests were made before, during or after the ball game. I have seen the videos on social media and *whilst we do not condone violence of any kind*, the event was marshalled very well by the organisers with minimal Police presence."
>
> "I have policed the ball game on and off for nearly 20 years and *due to its nature and traditional values there will always be a level of violence involved*. The people who take part, spectate and the actual players are aware of this." (Bridge 2020; my emphasis)

This "light touch" approach of the police is typical across all games. The sub-heading to the piece was "no arrests made or casualties reported at annual Shrove Tuesday event" and the first line "Claims a man's ear was 'ripped off' during the 820th edition of the Atherstone ball game have been dismissed by event organisers" (Bridge 2020). Although this pragmatic approach may seem a matter of choice, no locally-based official of any kind would relish being the agent who brings an end to the tradition. In other words, although the power to cancel rests primarily with local council and law enforcement, a certain amount of pressure is exerted on them by the community they serve – the expectation is that they are 'onside'.

It could be argued that the many sensationalist uploads of selected scenes framed as ritualised violence misrepresent the permissive ethos which characterises the tradition. Packaged as evidence of a tradition which facilitates assault, thuggery and damage to property, these videos risk placing the local authority and police in a position where they feel compelled to act.

PERFORMANCE

We move now to consider some of the performative aspects of the game. As we have noted, in Scotland main play begins at the site of the mercat cross, the symbolic heart of Scottish towns. In Jedburgh, although theoretically the town's business is going on as normal, this occupation of the symbolic centre signals it is now the players' time; their domination of the communal space is a visual assertion of this. The stage is set for a transformation of the familiar, the creation of a parallel reality where, yes, you can still go to the butcher's shop but you do so at your own risk and in any case cannot see what is on offer because the windows are barricaded. Perhaps this is part of the problem; the illusion of normality created by open shops and roads lulls the watching crowd into a sense of false security. The players are not exactly heedless, and will avoid crashing into onlookers if possible, but nor are they committed to arresting their momentum once on the move. Given the numbers of bodies and the physical robustness of many of the players, in many situations they are literally unstoppable. It is up to others to protect themselves and their property. The absence of police and officials adds to the disorientation and unfamiliarity. In Jedburgh the ambulance is to be found in the car park, one street away from the square where the core action takes place, as if not to transmit the idea that injuries are anticipated.

The town square and the streets have been de-familiarised, re-conceived conceptually even for the Jedburgh natives. As a stage, the ancient town square is itself transformed from its quotidian character into something more highly marked, profound, more active. In modern times the future of the tradition rests on what happens in that space on this one day each year. Through the performance of the game, the meaning of the place has thus changed, become unstable; relationships with it have changed. Notions of access and ownership fracture and become fluid; the game invokes and enhances locals' attachment to place and the past, while for visitors it alienates and confounds. In this way we see the game having the function of a kind of drama, temporarily

creating an alternate world in order to articulate and comment on the real one. Here, it speaks to the value of tradition; as the men struggle over the ba' – in their established, hyper-robust way – they simultaneously display their determination to see the game continue, despite threats to the contrary, and articulate the continuity of the community or network of communities who practise the distinctive tradition. Watching the game can provide the local observers with an alternate means to understand their environment, their history and themselves, invoking notions of loyalty and belonging as markers of identity.

It is significant that the majority of these games begin and are largely played not on a green field out of town, but in the historical, social and economic heart of the communities. Kirkwall and Jedburgh are both traditional Scottish towns; small shops, the architecture chiefly solid 18th and 19th century. Jedburgh has its castle and abbey, Kirkwall its cathedral; there are monuments and statuary aplenty. The close identification of the game with the built heritage enables it to embody the same notions of cultural and historical value possessed by the space itself. The streets *house* the tradition; the game is woven into the fabric of the community, memories of each annual occurrence forming part of the way the streets are read and understood. Although anomalous and baffling to the outside observer, over time the ba' has been normalised in its location, as natural a feature as the other venerable institutions which surround it. This may explain the particular horror attached to threats of the game's discontinuance, so intertwined it is with notions of belonging to the cultural landscape and collective social memory.

Particularly for the outsider, the sense that the game resembles a form of dramatic dialogue with those who would wish to regulate it or see it discontinued is suggested by the similarity of its staging with more familiar forms of protest which also involve taking over public spaces without official permission and feature the disruption of commerce and the movement of people. In other words, it looks like a challenge to the establishment. The deliberately decontextualised violent imagery selected by some media is central to this dialogue. Speaking of activists who use "performative violence" to challenge the state, Jeffrey Juris notes it is "a specific mode of communication […] producing concrete messages challenging global capitalism and the state. At the same time, dominant media frames reinterpret the resulting images as random acts of senseless violence, undermining activists more generally" (Juris 2005: 413).

The 'concrete message' robustly communicated through their play (and supported by those invested in the tradition) is their determination to see the games continue on their terms. This message can be undermined by sensationalist imagery misrepresenting the true picture. There is thus a kind of information war taking place. Local media, as in the Atherstone example above, can be relied upon to downplay any injuries or disturbance.

ON PERFORMANCE AND MASCULINITY

These traditions are exclusively male and to a significant degree function as a convenient annual

expressive component of manliness. We speak here not just of adult men; in both Kirkwall and Jedburgh, a boys' game precedes the men's.

In Jedburgh, we can discern the well-established societal link between sporting prowess and status, the ba' game mirroring the school playing field as a site where these behavioural norms are ingrained from a young age. The town looks on as their sons are inducted into this male preserve, normalising the celebration and dramatisation of male solidarity, courage, physical prowess, assertiveness and confidence.

Indeed one might say the exclusion of women and girls is necessary for the game to achieve these functions. Significant, if short-lived prestige is attached to the boy who hails a ba'. Quite young boys take part – perhaps as young as ten – but the majority are in their last couple of years at school. Over the years I have conducted fieldwork in Jedburgh we have encountered many examples of boys proudly sharing their minor injuries with me and speaking appreciatively of those they knew who suffered more significant mishaps, such as breakages.

This game can thus function as a very public proving ground for emerging masculinity, providing an annual opportunity for the community to observe the boys' journey through adolescence as their physical strength and presence develops, culminating at the age of 18 when they join the men's game.

There is a role for girls and young women, who crowd close to the action in the market square of Jedburgh to cheer on their classmates or favourite boy. The ba' has ribbons attached, which come loose as it is handled by the players. These can be presented to a girl, or retrieved from the ground where they fall.

There is no such proving ground associated with the young women's development; as David Gilmore puts it:

> An authentic femininity rarely involves tests or proofs of action, or confrontations with dangerous foes: win or lose contests dramatically played out on the public stage. Rather than a critical threshold passed by traumatic testing, an either/or condition, femininity is more often construed as a biological given that is culturally refined or augmented (Gilmore 1990: 12).

As may be seen in the videos linked to this discussion, there was perhaps a surfeit of testosterone on display in the men's game. One might think, therefore, that the opportunity for the projection of typical markers of masculinity by the adult players to the watching women and non-playing men might be a motivation for their taking part. After all, one could argue the element of risk is vital to creating the necessary environment for this display and the deployment of physical strength and bravado. Evidence of stamina and the ability to endure pain are part of the theatre of the game, accompanied by the visual and audible cues of grimacing and grunting.

What is interesting of the games of the Borders – those I know best and can comment on with most authority – is that the game presents as an experience for the players alone. Other than when they score, they do not acknowledge those who watch, nor respond to the shouts of the onlookers; they concentrate on the game and themselves only.

They are turned inward. They see only each other, communicate only among themselves. Often there is little sound; indeed there may be silence, a weird hiatus as they are locked into each other in a scrum, almost immobile, until something happens and play resumes.

We speak here of onlookers and in Jedburgh it is perfectly possible, if exhausting, to run with the players and follow the action. The same is true of Kirkwall. We noted earlier, however, that in some locations the hails are kilometres apart. Here it is not just a case of an audience being unheeded by the players, but once they move beyond the central area they are by themselves and no one is watching. Only the most dedicated of followers would trudge through the snow to watch the men struggling over a small leather ball, in the pitch dark of a Scottish winter. This underscores the kind of intimate phenomenon we have identified and the nature of how and what it communicates. Others may enjoy the spectacle and relish the dramatisation of a shared heritage, or gawp at its strangeness, but it is not intended for them. It is not a performance of this kind. Nor is it spectator sport; indeed it is highly debatable whether this kind of event implies an audience at all – the game can be successfully conducted by two individuals alone in a field (Hornby 2008: 131). As we have noted, this is not a contest which has the chief aim of diminishing the other, or where victory brings lasting prestige or even of demonstrating superior skill to any real extent. The sense of it being a team effort is undermined by the fact that to some degree players are out for themselves, that the game only happens once or twice a year and designations up/down have no or little meaning at other times of the year. Real rivalry based on frequent encounters over time or individual or group characteristics are absent. The fact that in the Borders games around Jedburgh, players from different villages form a network of participants means there is a lack of differentiation on which the logic of a true agonistic encounter rests. At the local level, such as in Jedburgh and the small villages nearby, introducing intra- or inter-community disharmony through the deliberate creation of ill-feeling benefits no-one and if anything, works *against* participation in the tradition.

REGULATION AND THE FUTURE

The dilemma of traditional handball is that is in danger of disappearing through being banned, yet in order to remain in its present form it must resist detailed regulation or institutionalisation. Kirkwall has had a committee since 1949. Their remit is limited to selecting who throws up the ba' to start the game, ensuring access to materials to make the ball and deciding where the balls should be subsequently displayed after play. They also, importantly, arrange for a disclamatory notice to be placed in the newspaper and in shop windows. It is Orkney Island Council, not the Committee who pay for repairs (Robertson 2005: 62–64). Such a notice does not necessarily absolve the Council, Committee or perhaps even individual players from legal action.

Atherstone's Committee was formed in 1986 and now fundraises in order to pay for the taking out of liability insurance and paying marshalls.

They are very alert to the possibility of the game being discontinued. This may not necessarily be down to official and public reaction to a serious injury or fatality; one obvious problem with insurance is that once a successful claim has been made the premium will rise, perhaps beyond what can be afforded, leading to the end of the tradition.

Having no organising committee and by claiming that the event is 'a happening' and not a planned event, the local councillors and organisers at Jedburgh ensure there is no individual or group against whom to lodge a claim. I am told that every year the local council Events Planning team contact local councillors seeking a risk assessment statement, the councillors replying that they do not know who the organisers are. Billy Gillies, Jedburgh stalwart, had this to say to local newspaper the *Southern Reporter*:

> Nobody runs the ba'. It's a labour of love – a real enjoyment. There's no organisation. If you organise it, it becomes something different. It's the old men that keep the ba' alive because it's them who pass on the tradition each year to the young folk. Every year they say it's better than the last. (Hornby 2008: 112)

The aim at Jedburgh is therefore that it must remain an example of 'informal heritage' or, to use the phrase we hear from players and locals every year 'a happening'. Of the notion of heritages Christian Barrère observes:

> Even where they are informal, they result from a selection. Only some elements of the past pass through time. Those that do have a particular value, which justifies their transmission from generation to generation as well as their preservation. This value is generally linked to a specific attribute, a particular quality. (Barrère 2016: 88)

And here is the problem. The 'particular quality' of the ba' *is* its unregulated nature. Yet in practice this aspect only very rarely leads to serious incident or difficulty on the ground. There is a recognition – albeit reluctantly by some – that the tradition comes first, that its continuation trumps concerns about broken windows. As we have argued above, we might say the men are *performing* their claim to have the right to play in this format. With any tradition, we would expect development over time; the main change here is the injection of acute anxiety and concern for the survival of the whole tradition, which has actually affected the game itself as it is played physically and produced a heightened sense of the players' responsibility to themselves, to those around and to the tradition. This is a form which has become hyper-vigilant, fearful of the single incident which would bring it to an end – indeed, fearful of the future. Ironically, as some may think that we are witnessing the performance of violence, what we are actually seeing in Jedburgh and Kirkwall is largely this new, highly self-conscious 'be careful' approach above all else. Photographers have always clustered around the players – the regional authorities, if not the world, are watching. Visually, these heaving masses of maledom resemble images of protestors occupying erstwhile shared space, seeking to force a change in the order of things. It may look like disorder and is certainly disruptive of the normal flow of day to day life, but unlike violence in the

service of societal change, this game is actually about the preservation of the status quo. It may appear to be subversive of order but in fact has the contrary aim of entrenching that which has always been, protecting itself against the forces of change which threaten its existence.

As Simon J. Bronner observes:

> Tradition […] involves a negotiation between individuals and their various communities, often about alterations to the traditions responding to changes at the time of the enactment. As traditions, rather than rules, customs and norms are subject to change; individuals often creatively influence or innovate traditions. This malleability also makes traditions vulnerable in a complex, diverse society and puts more pressure on participants to be concerned for outsiders' perceptions raised about the traditions as they are performed by insiders. (Bronner 2005: 26)

This process has been ongoing for some years and over the past twenty I have observed a change in its character – less rowdy, and producing more interventions from those who stand close by. In a very perceptive essay on violence in folk football Laurent Fournier, a French colleague of traditional sport who has attended Jedburgh regularly, observes:

> Fieldwork on folk football matches thus shows that violence is eliminated at different levels: the fear to see the game being banned in the next years, the fact that everybody knows each other in the game, and the presence of women and children among the spectators has led the players to a lot of self-control in spite of the roughness of the play. (Fournier 2013: 47)

Fournier uses the term 'roughness' and of course this is exactly what we are observing. Roughness is built-in, mandatory, an expected and embedded characteristic. This is how it is played. It 'comes with the territory'. It is unruly – literally so, as there are no rules – but there are codes of conduct and conventions which govern how it is played; no one left on the ground (Robertson 2005: 41) and no punching. However, as we have noted above, it is precisely the apparent violence or threat of it that attracts or repels outsiders. Some outsiders will see the surface features and express shock; others, as argued above, will be attracted because unlike modern, highly-regulated sport the game offers the 'thrill factor', the seductive possibility that an actual fight will break out, that violence will emerge and escalate. This is not a fanciful observation; one need only watch ice hockey to see how popular the periodic fighting is with the spectators. Ironically, the game the ba' most closely resembles, rugby, is as rough a game as can be imagined. The difference is that Scottish handball takes place on the street, and the street is where we live and work and shop and walk with our children and thus the game is easily perceived as threatening, especially since it appears players have 'taken over' the space and we feel vulnerable. But I have rarely if ever seen anything which we would class in the category of unrestrained violence or anything with a threatening character. It is intensely physical, yet can be, well, gentlemanly – and I think this sums up the ba', certainly in the Borders. If we put our Jedburgh ba' players into striped and spotted shirts and placed them on a pristine green pitch there would be little to distinguish from the official

game of rugby as regards physicality. Indeed that some kind of connection with the official sport is being made is indicated by the common practice of players wearing rugby shirts. Hugh Hornby's photographs for his book on the phenomenon *Uppies and Doonies* show every single player at the revived game at the Scottish Border town of Duns wearing a rugby shirt (Hornby 2008: 137). The game there has been adapted to a modern urban environment and lasts only around 30 minutes. Hornby remarks "Rather than brute force, familiar concepts in modern sport, such as agility, speed, finding space and 'pass and move' play a much greater part" (Hornby 2008: 137). This perhaps suggests a possible future, should the more traditional form be required to change. At Duns, there is even a referee. Substituting the ba' for the approved rough sport of rugby was attempted in Kirkwall on Christmas Day in 1875, when Kirkwall Football Club held a rugby match on a field, timed to coincide with the traditional game. The game between Uppies and Doonies went on for two hours in heavy rain. The local paper noted that this innovation would not succeed unless backed by the authorities. It was not, and on New Year's Day the ba' took place on the streets as usual (Robertson 2005: 91).

CONCLUSION

Although we are disputing whether there is any intentional violence exhibited by players in these games, the highly physical performance of the game aligns with Riches' statement that violent acts achieve "both instrumental and expressive functions" (Riches 1986: 11). However shocking to the uninitiated, the jostling, pushing and shoving are in the service of the game, of scoring and winning. Such behaviour is tactical, practical, rational and usually unemotional, in that it is seldom retaliatory and genuine ill-feeling is rarely witnessed. These actions are also expressive of a shared understanding among the players and those watching; this is our tradition, this is what it looks like and we are both permitted and expected to behave in this way. Indeed if an individual wishes to play they must, by and large, exhibit these behaviours, which are legitimised by this same tradition.

If from the community in which the game is played, a majority of those gathered to watch share the same understanding. The local community may have temporarily lost control of their streets, but the players have not lost control of themselves. The problems arise from the non-local perspective, which, in seeking to read this oddly transfigured environment, can only call upon images of unrest, chaos and lawlessness, or more highly-regulated sporting encounters where discipline has broken down. Quotidian order has been raucously destabilised, but as a facet of the venerable European carnivalesque, a wished-for, periodic interruption to the seasonal round.

The absence of central control and physical barriers means that any of those watching could become a 'victim', injured as a result of the nature of the game. This, however, is accepted; the normal expectation of personal safety is ceded in favour of being part of the action. When we reflect on what circumstance might give rise to actual violence, ironically it is the failure of a player

unfamiliar with the local codes to stay within the accepted boundaries of physical contact. Such an individual undermines the tacit ground rules and threatens the tradition itself. The police are largely passive, having respect for unwritten local rules, not wishing to suppress that which they may see as peculiarly their own. These games continue amid a careful balancing act; a treasured lack of restraint set against the risk to continuance if the authorities are provoked. One might speculate that it is helpful that the games survive at the extremities of Scottish geography; being far from the metropolitan centres, this more easily allows the maintenance of unofficial methods of problem-solving which mitigate against central control of the tradition.

Whilst the influx of curious tourists to the games at Jedburgh and Kirkwall may be welcome economically, ironically the public visibility which results via media exposure represents a threat to the very activity which brings visitors in the first place. Those games in the small villages are relatively secure, their out-of-the-way location attracting few outsiders and the more spacious layout offering only limited potential for damage to property. The main threat to their existence is the paucity of young players.

Christian Barrère identifies three kinds of informal heritage: 'heritages that are informal prior to becoming institutionalized and formal, heritages that will remain informal, staying out of the perimeter and off the lists of official heritages [, and] informal aspects of formal heritages' (Barrère 2016: 88). It remains to be seen how long traditional Scottish handball, with its long and cherished history, can remain 'out of the perimeter'.

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Joel Conn is a civil litigation partner in the long-established Glasgow firm, Mitchells Roberton. His practice includes property litigation, professional negligence, and debt and asset recovery (in which he is accredited as a specialist by the Law Society of Scotland). Having become interested in urban legends during his 20s, he found his way to membership of the Folklore Society and the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. His particular interests are in contemporary folklore and folk-life related to law and regulation, as well as modern Jewish culture and practice. He is a fiercely proud Glaswegian but also unathletic. Thus, he has never climbed the Duke of Wellington to adorn him with a cone.

Dr Murray Cook, FSA Scot, MCIFA is an archaeologist currently employed in Stirling Council where he also advises Clackmannanshire, North Lanarkshire and Falkirk Councils. He has worked across Scotland since 1996. Over sixty publications include a series of popular books on Stirling's history and archaeology. He runs an independent research and training organisation 'Rampart Scotland' as well as a volunteer research group 'Stirling Archaeology'. Both organisations work with volunteers to explore Scotland's amazing past. To find out more about Murray's work follow Stirling Archaeology | Substack.

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Dr Stephen Miller has a broad range of research interests including the folklore, folk song, and folk dance of the Isle of Man; also, the Scottish folklorists the Rev. Walter Gregor (1825–97) and W.G. Black (1857–1932). A further area of research is the institutional history of the Folk-Lore Society. Previously posts have included working at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Vienna. Recent publications include *Ghosts, Bugganes & Fairy Pigs: Karl Roeder's Manx Notes & Queries* (Culture Vannin, 2022 3rd edn) and *The Notes and Queries Folklore Column, 1849–1947: Subject Indexes* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021), WWW site: www.chiollaghbooks.com. He was awarded the Reih Bleeaney Vanannan in 2020 for contributions to Manx culture.

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